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U.S. official says evidence proves Iran tied to Taliban

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PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A5
DATELINE: PARIS
SOURCE: Record news services
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 91

The United States has "irrefutable" evidence that Iran is transferring weapons to the Taliban in Afghanistan, with the knowledge of the Iranian government, and NATO has intercepted some of the shipments, a senior U.S. diplomat said yesterday.

"There's irrefutable evidence the Iranians are now doing this," said Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns on CNN. "It's certainly coming from the government of Iran. It's coming from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard corps command, which is a basic unit of the Iranian government."

Burns said that NATO needs to act to stop the shipments.

Battle drawing foreign insurgents to Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200706140129
PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.06.14
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DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 182

Foreign and Afghan insurgents drawn by the sound and fury of battle are in the northern region of Kandahar province to fight coalition forces trying to reassert government control, says the commander of the Canadian battle group.

Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said yesterday recent fighting in the Sha Wali Kot district has attracted Taliban insurgents from across the province as well as Arab and Chechen fighters from abroad.

"They are drawn to the sounds of the drums and the guns so that's where they are moving at this point," Walker told reporters at the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield.

Operation Adalat was launched earlier this month with the goal of rooting out insurgents from the area and preventing them from moving to the relatively more secure areas in the south of Kandahar province.

Canadians are involved in Operation Adalat and also engaged in battles elsewhere.

"We've been busier in the last two or three weeks than we were for the first half of the tour but I have to say the attacks that we are dealing with are more sporadic," Walker said.

Yesterday, Canadian troops were involved in a two-hour firefight in Zhari district west of Kandahar city, he said. There was no mention of any coalition casualties.

Harper must change his cabinet lineup, and soon

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PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.06.14
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SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A6
COLUMN: THE NATION
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Gordon O'Connor; Photo: Peter MacKay ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: JAMES TRAVERS
SOURCE: TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 531

This spring of discontent is about to become Stephen Harper's difficult summer.

Before fall the prime minister must accomplish something at least as problematic in politics as in business: Add freshness to a product advertised as new but looking very old.

In this case the merchandise is Conservative rule and one strategy is bring it back to market in September with a throne speech setting second-generation priorities.

Another getting less public but more private attention is to shuffle a cabinet that's mostly inept when not anonymous.

That won't be easy. Moving the few good performers is risky and Harper's look-at-me tactics keep all but a few colleagues from demonstrating or polishing their talents. But there's urgency for the prime minister beyond applying a veneer over fissures exposed by the Atlantic Accord, income trusts and this government's surfacing mean streak. Harper's administration is a weakling on the issue demanding the most muscle — Afghanistan.

Gordon O'Connor, Peter MacKay and Josee Verner are the government's 3Ds of defence, diplomacy and development. They are also, in order, a disaster, a dilettante and a disappointment.

Of the three, the defence minister is responsible for the deepest self-inflicted wounds. A former soldier seemingly incapable of making the transition to civilian oversight, O'Connor's superficial grasp of the portfolio, particularly the treatment of prisoners and bereaved families, is crippling for a government and country at war.

Summer job 1 for a prime minister who would rather chew broken glass than admit a mistake is to find a face-saving place for the man who should never have been minister. The out-of-sight Treasury Board is being discussed, even though O'Connor's presence there could only slow its transition into a management innovator.

MacKay's towel-snapping locker room charm would make him a better fit at Defence than cerebral Foreign Affairs where — oh please say this anecdote is apocryphal — he startled cabinet by struggling to locate Geneva in Switzerland.

Harper must change his cabinet lineup, and soon

But a strong Defence performer is so desperately needed that Harper may opt for a twofer by shifting competent Jim Flaherty out of Finance where he's an equalization and income trust target.

In contrast, the Verner problem is in scale with her modest portfolio. Under attack for preferring cheque writing to risky projects and for failing to make aid synonymous with Afghanistan, the Canadian International Development Agency needs a fresh ministerial face to make the polarizing mission seem more about reconstruction.

But Verner also personifies Harper's problem. It's as hard to find someone in cabinet — or waiting in caucus — better able to argue the Afghanistan case in Quebec than it is to force-fit other cabinet square pegs into this government's gaping round holes.

That wouldn't be so challenging if petty political jealousy and Alberta's Conservative overload wasn't keeping capable Diane Ablonczy on the sidelines.

And it would be no worry at all if Harper had more than one Jim Prentice to reward with even more responsibility than perpetually vexed Indian Affairs.

Still, those realities torture all prime ministers. Rarely is there a surplus of ability and even more rarely is it distributed evenly enough to maximize its utility.

But Harper no longer enjoys the luxury of excuses. He must regain control of the national agenda by autumn or Conservatives, like their immediate Liberal predecessors, will force voters to choose between the lesser of evils.

That worked for Jean Chretien but not for Paul Martin and must now be self-evident to as serious a student of politics as Stephen Harper.

James Travers covers national issues.

Homeward Bound

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.06.14

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B3

PHOTO: The Canadian Press

ILLUSTRATION: Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, (right) leads the friends and fellowsoldiers of slain Trooper Darryl Caswell down the tarmac at Kandahar, Afghanistan, airfield last night as they escort his casket into the plane that will bring him back to Canada today. Caswell, 25, died Monday when an armoured vehicle in which he was riding struck a roadside bomb.

Foreigners joining Taliban battle

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.06.14

SECTION: World

PAGE: A5

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 482

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Foreign and Afghan insurgents drawn by the sound and fury of battle are in the northern region of Kandahar province to fight coalition forces trying to reassert government control, says the commander of the Canadian battle group. Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said Wednesday recent fighting in the Sha Wali Kot district has attracted Taliban insurgents from across the province as well as Arab and Chechen fighters from abroad.

"They are drawn to the sounds of the drums and the guns so that's where they are moving at this point," Walker told reporters at the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield.

Earlier this year, the governor of neighbouring Helmand province had estimated there were at least 700 foreign fighters there from Chechnya, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Walker said he couldn't estimate the number of foreign insurgents in Kandahar province, the main area of operations for Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan. But the pool of rebel forces in Sha Wali Kot itself has become so large that international forces are prompted into taking action.

Operation Adalat was launched earlier this month with the goal of rooting out insurgents from the area and preventing them from moving to the relatively more secure areas in the south of Kandahar province.

Canadian troops are part of Operation Adalat, returning to an area they'd left a year ago.

The move south had left a vacuum for the Taliban to return to the area, Col. Mike Cessford, deputy commander of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan, said earlier this week. But he maintained it was the right decision at the time, as the priority then was to focus on the more densely populated southern portions of the province.

As Canadians were pulling back from the district last year, four soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb. Now, another has died as fighting was flaring up once again.

Trooper Darryl Caswell, 25, was killed when his Coyote armoured vehicle struck an improvised explosive device on Monday. He was part of a convoy heading to resupply Canadian troops involved in Operation Adalat.

International troops lined the tarmac tonight at Kanadhar Airfield to honour the 25-year-old before his body was transported back to Canada.

Canadians are also engaged in battles elsewhere.

"We've been busier in the last two or three weeks than we were for the first half of the tour but I have to say the attacks that we are dealing with are more sporadic," Walker said.

On Wednesday, Canadian troops were involved in a two-hour firefight in Zhari district west of Kandahar city, he said. There was no mention of any coalition casualties.

There has also been an upsurge in the number of roadside bombs found, Walker said.

On the day Caswell was killed, combat teams came into contact with other improvised explosive devices the Zhari, Panjwaii, Kandahar City and lower Sha Wali Kot areas of the province.

No other injuries or deaths resulted.

"For the most part, the attacks we're involved with, the skirmishes we are involved with are of our making," Walker said.

Taliban forces "seem to be moving through, transiting through" instead of staying, Walker said, suggesting it's happening in large part due to villagers refusing to offer them shelter for fear of being caught up in fighting.

Hundreds bid farewell to slain Canadian soldier

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.06.14

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B7

COLUMN: Around the globe

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 87

Slain Canadian soldier Trooper Darryl Caswell is headed home.

International troops lined the tarmac tonight at Kanadhar Airfield to honour the 25-year-old.

The pain of his loss was clear in the eyes of his fellow soldiers, who tightly gripped his casket and each other as they slowly marched toward the Hercules aircraft that brings fallen soldiers back to Canada.

Major Malcolm Berry remembers Caswell as a practical joker with a "great sense of ha-ha" and says his influence and standards will live on for all who knew and loved him.

Caswell died Monday when his Coyote vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb.

He is the 57th Canadian soldier to be killed in Afghanistan.

Government marching down the same explosive–strewn path

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.06.14

SECTION: Opinion

PAGE: A7

COLUMN: View from here

BYLINE: Susan Riley

ILLUSTRATION: MacKay

WORD COUNT: 779

A recent poll reveals two things: that two–thirds of Canadians want our soldiers out of Afghanistan by the February, 2009 deadline – and, by extension, that Canadians are not easily fooled. They understand that however noble our ambitions for that battered country, however idealistic our soldiers (another of whom died Tuesday) and diplomats, this is a war the West will never win. The best we can hope for is a lull in hostilities lasting long enough to allow NATO to declare victory and get the heck out.

Despite military attempts to limit independent reporting, and the difficulty of getting the story in a country where few outside reporters speak the language, a picture is emerging of what is really going on. It is incomplete and complicated, but it doesn't much resemble the sunny accounts delivered in bland unison by Stephen Harper's ministers.

Not long ago, PBS Frontline sent veteran reporter Sam Kiley on an outing with Canadian troops stationed at Camp Martello, south of Kandahar. His report catalogued a comedy of errors, as well–meaning Canadian soldiers tried to secure spark plugs to get village wells running. This involved lumbering down dangerous roads in tanks, shooting at a civilian truck that came too close and injuring its passengers, failing to secure the necessary parts and, finally, abandoning the villagers to the mercies of the Taliban.

Kiley was filled with admiration for the soldiers; his report was not intended to ridicule their efforts, but to illustrate – as he did, brilliantly–the difficulty of winning hearts and minds from inside a tank. It is like trying to remove a sliver wearing down mittens: even the most skilled surgeon is doomed to fail.

Rather than rethinking military strategy, however, the Harper government marches on, down the same explosive–strewn path. It talks more about reconstruction these days but, according to recent figures, of 36,000 foreign soldiers in Afghanistan, only 2,000 to 2,500 are engaged in rebuilding. Only a portion of international aid money has been spent, either because there is no security or because there is confusion over who will supervise proposed projects.

Yet all we hear from senior ministers is happy talk. Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay last week reported that "in the last few weeks, our provincial reconstruction team hosted an important human rights workshop" attended by Afghan army, security and police officials.

What's next? Gourmet cooking classes to help Afghan widows get back on their feet?

MacKay also reported that one of the "most touching" experiences of his recent visit to Afghanistan was watching Canadians distribute new uniforms to Afghan police. "The pride they felt in receiving those uniforms, which sported the Afghan flag, was nothing short of amazing. It was very reminiscent, I'm sure, of the feeling our own RCMP have on graduation." Also reminiscent of a scene from Evelyn Waugh's novel

Scoop, a timeless spoof of war reporting. (In a country where 50 per cent of men are unemployed, could it be the steady paycheck, not the uniforms, that inspired excitement?)

As for the fate of detainees handed over to Afghan authorities, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor explains that under an improved monitoring regime, every time a detainee is turned over, Afghan authorities get a copy of Canada's expectations regarding proper treatment, with a carbon copy going to the prisoner (who, as Public Security Minister Stockwell Day points out, "are suspected terrorists, people who know no limits when it comes to the suicide killing of others.") Despite the sinister nature of detainees, and Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge upon enemies," its prisons have moved "in very short time" from the revenge system to respect for human rights, Day claims.

As for how many detainees we have handed over, MacKay says he can't say because many Afghans have the same name and no street addresses, or birth certificates –making it difficult to track individuals, "particularly those whose stated purpose is to avoid detection." But, apart from not knowing where detainees are, and despite Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge," all is now well on that front.

"Rome was not built in a day," Secretary of State Helena Guergis chirpily reminded the Commons defence committee recently. As to why her government didn't protest the ejection of human rights activist Malalai Joya from the Afghan parliament for comparing fellow members to zoo animals, Guergis replied: "It's their Parliament." Still, it sounds as if they could use another human rights workshop.

Susan Riley writes for the Ottawa Citizen.

Sharing memories; Friends of fallen soldier remember buddy

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.06.14

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Stephanie Levitz

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: Canadian Cpl. Wade Wick (left) and Trooper Steve Davidson, friends of slain Trooper Darryl Caswell, talk about their friend in Kandahar, Afghanistan, Wednesday. – Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 282

Memories of Trooper Darryl Caswell bring smiles to his fellow soldiers in Afghanistan; the lost promise of what could have been brings pain.

It was evident on the faces of eight of his fellow soldiers early this morning in Afghanistan as they solemnly marched Caswell's casket past row upon row of coalition troops standing at attention at Kandahar Airfield.

They tightly gripped the coffin and each other as they made their way to the Hercules transport plane flying Caswell home to Canada.

Among them was Trooper Steve Davidson, 20, who had planned to buy a house with Caswell to be free of the cramped confines of living in military barracks.

He was joined by Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, who had struck a deal with Caswell to start a didgeridoo band. They had bought the aboriginal musical instruments on a recent trip to Australia, where Caswell fulfilled a life-long goal to dive at the Great Barrier Reef.

Caswell, 25, died Monday when an armoured vehicle he was riding in struck a roadside bomb about 40 kilometres north of Kandahar.

"Being in his crew over here was probably the best experience I ever had with a guy," said Wick, who was injured in the blast that killed Caswell.

Even in the darkest moments on the battlefield, Caswell always had a sense of humour, the men said.

"He was always trying to get the best out of everybody, bring out the best, don't take anything for granted," Wick said Wednesday.

They were lessons Davidson took to heart.

"He pushed me, he pushed to do things that I would never have done before. He pushed me to be a better person, a better man, he pushed me to be a better soldier, he pushed me just to love life," he said. "He had a love for life. He was an incredible person."

The men were all part of the reconnaissance squadron of the Royal Canadian Dragoons. Their blue and red regimental flag fluttered in the hot night air of Kandahar early this morning as Caswell's body began the long journey home.

Foreign insurgents joining Afghan nationals, Canada's battle commander says

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 97

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) _ The commander of the Canadian battle group in Afghanistan says foreign fighters are joining the ranks of insurgents in northern Kandahar.

Lt.-Col. Rob Walker says Arabs and Chechens are massing alongside Afghans in the Sha Wali Kot district.

It's an area that saw a heavy Canadian presence last year, but efforts had been scaled back to focus on the southern parts of the province where more civilians live.

But Walker says Canadian troops are back in Sha Wali Kot to destroy what he calls an insurgent sanctuary.

He says according to reports, insurgents there have sustained losses over the last couple of weeks.

One Canadian soldier was killed Monday on a supply convoy heading to troops in the area.

Slain Canadian's friends cherish past memories, mourn lost future

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 741

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) _ Memories of Trooper Darryl Caswell bring smiles to his fellow soldiers in Afghanistan; the lost promise of what could have been brings pain.

It was evident on the faces of eight of his fellow soldiers early Thursday morning in Afghanistan as they solemnly marched Caswell's casket past row upon row of coalition troops standing at attention at Kandahar Airfield.

They tightly gripped the coffin and each other as they made their way to the Hercules transport plane flying Caswell home to Canada.

Among them was Trooper Steve Davidson, 20, who had planned to buy a house with Caswell to be free of the cramped confines of living in military barracks.

He was joined by Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, who had struck a deal with Caswell to start a didgeridoo band. They had bought the Aboriginal musical instruments on a recent trip to Australia, where Caswell fulfilled a life-long goal to dive at the Great Barrier Reef.

Caswell, 25, died Monday when an armoured vehicle he was riding in struck a roadside bomb about 40 kilometres north of Kandahar.

"Being in his crew over here was probably the best experience I ever had with a guy," said Wick, who was injured in the blast that killed Caswell.

Even in the darkest moments on the battlefield, Caswell always had a sense of humour, the men said. He was quick with a joke from one of their favourite movies or a quip to ease the tension.

"He was always trying to get the best out of everybody, bring out the best, don't take anything for granted," Wick said Wednesday.

They were lessons Davidson took to heart. The pair had been best friends since meeting in training, and Davidson said Caswell made him the man he is today.

"He pushed me, he pushed to do things that I would never have done before. He pushed me to be a better person, a better man, he pushed me to be a better soldier, he pushed me just to love life," he said.

"He had a love for life. He was an incredible person."

The men were all part of the reconnaissance squadron of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, a regiment that often leads the way for convoys supplying troops in the field _ and becomes the first to take a hit.

Their blue and red regimental flag fluttered in the hot night air of Kandahar early Thursday morning as Caswell's body began the long journey home.

“Every loss is a serious loss and it’s a sad loss for the battle group, particularly for recce squadron,” said Lt.-Col Rob Walker, commander of 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group.

“They’ve lost soldiers here before.”

Master Cpl. Allan Stewart, 30, and Trooper Patrick James Pentland, 23, died in April when their Coyote vehicle struck an improvised explosive device.

Canadian troops were in the Sha Wali Kot district of northern Kandahar last year but had scaled back their presence there to focus on the southern parts of the province.

The Canadians are now back in Sha Wali Kot to destroy what Walker called an insurgent sanctuary. He said foreign fighters have been massing alongside Afghans in the district.

Caswell’s vehicle was part of a supply convoy for troops in the area when it was hit by the roadside bomb.

“We wake up everyday, look at each other and be thankful that we still had another day,” Wick said, with the stoicism of soldiers talking about their fallen brethren.

“Nothing happens today, tomorrow we do the same thing.”

They’re still doing their job the same way, but sharing the stress has brought them all closer, Wick said.

“The thing with losing a friend like this: you feel like you lose a part of yourself because they know so much about you and you know so much about them,” he said, calling Caswell part of his family.

The motto of the Dragoons is “Bold and Swift,” and Caswell was known for his love of speed in the driver’s seat of his Coyote.

His friends nicknamed him “Ricky Bobby” after a Will Ferrell character of a race car driver obsessed with going fast.

But mostly, they just called him ‘Cas.

Wick said Caswell had learned a great deal during his time in Afghanistan.

“He would always mention that he had more of an appreciation for things back home,” he said. “He’d see the people here and see how little they had and how grateful he was (for the) freedoms and opportunities that he has back home.”

Like he did with Davidson, Caswell also pushed his little brother to go to school and “do something cool” with his life, Wick said.

His family had been expecting him to call home for his brother’s birthday when they received word that he had been killed.

“That was one thing he always talked about, his family back home. He was worried about his little brother and sister going to university,” Wick said. “He was more worried about them than he was about himself.”

Maj. Malcolm Berry remembered Caswell as a practical joker with a “great sense of ha-ha.” He said Caswell’s influence and standards will live on in the hearts and minds of all who knew and loved him.

With their tour of duty in Afghanistan months away from ending, Wick said the men plan to memorialize their fallen Dragoon brothers in a way that would make Caswell smile _ tattoos.

Caswell loved them and was an avid collector, always swearing it would be his last.

Wicks said he and Caswell had planned to get them for Pentland and Stewart, and now he'll honour him that way too.

``We are not going to let them be forgotten."''

CTV National News, Wednesday, June 13

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 363

TORONTO _ A series of raids leads to over 60 arrests of suspected gang members across southern Ontario, but focused on north Toronto; police seize guns and drugs. CVD

TORONTO _ Experts agree on a list of symptoms that may alert women to ovarian cancer, which traditionally has been hard to diagnose until it's already advanced. CVD

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ Ramp ceremony held for Trooper Darryl Caswell, killed earlier this week; he was the 57th Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan. CVD

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip _ More than a million residents of the Gaza Strip trapped in the crossfire between Hamas and Fatah, and Hamas appears to be winning, having seized key Fatah positions; there are genuine fears fighting could ignite across the West Bank, where Fatah holds sway. CVD

SAMARRA, Iraq _ Suspected al-Qaida bombers hit Golden Mosque, a Shia shrine, setting off a round of violence in which Sunni sites are attacked. CVD

OTTAWA _ Bank of Canada governor David Dodge says interest rates will have to rise in order to keep inflation in check; he also suggested that the Canadian dollar may be overvalued. CVD

CALGARY _ Liberals win byelection in former premier Ralph Klein's riding; some say it's the result of neglect by Premier Ed Stelmach, who has been accused of ignoring Calgary's growth problems. CVD

OTTAWA _ Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert says his province will take up Prime Minister Stephen Harper's challenge to sue the federal government over the equalization formula in its budget. CVD

OTTAWA _ Eighty-year-old widow of a veteran says she wants Prime Minister Stephen Harper to keep a promise he made to her while in Opposition about extending Veterans Independence Program benefit to widows of all Second World War and Korean War veterans; in a meeting on Wednesday, Harper told her it will be in the next budget. CVD

UNDATED _ Jim Balsillie, prospective new owner of the NHL's Nashville Predators, spends the evening seeking Hamilton city council's consent to use the Copps Coliseum as the team's home arena. CVD

UNDATED _ Conference Board of Canada gives country bad marks when it comes to innovation and the environment. CVD

UNDATED _ Joint Canadian-U.S. report suggests that as much as one-third of Mars was once covered by water. CVD

NEWMARKET, Ont. _ Warner Berger, 69, is back from having become the oldest Canadian and North American to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Previously CVD

CP Toronto

U.S. diplomat says NATO has intercepted Iranian weapons shipments to Taliban

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS JUSTICE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 145

PARIS (AP) _ The United States has "irrefutable" evidence that Iran is transferring weapons to the Taliban in Afghanistan, with the knowledge of the Iranian government, and NATO has intercepted some of the shipments, a senior U.S. diplomat said Wednesday.

"There's irrefutable evidence the Iranians are now doing this," said Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns on CNN. "It's certainly coming from the government of Iran. It's coming from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard corps command, which is a basic unit of the Iranian government."

Speaking separately to The Associated Press, Burns also said that NATO needs to act to stop the shipments. The Iran-Afghanistan frontier is "a very long border. But the Iranians need to know that we are there and that we're going to oppose this."

"It's a very serious question," he said, adding that Iran is in "outright violation" of relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions.

MackKay says he's raised Khadr case with U.S. counterpart

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 146

OTTAWA (CP) _ Canada's foreign minister says he has made several requests on behalf of a prisoner detained at Guantanamo Bay and accused by the U.S. government of being a terrorist.

Peter MacKay said Wednesday that he contacted his American counterpart Condoleezza Rice last week about the case of Omar Khadr, the 20-year-old who has been in jail since he was 15.

The foreign affairs minister said he asked Rice to ensure that Khadr be granted better access to his family, legal counsel, and educational material as he has requested.

Khadr was accused of tossing a grenade that killed one U.S. soldier and injured another in Afghanistan in 2002.

A U.S. military judge last week dismissed the charges against Khadr on a technicality, but he has remained in custody.

``I asked specifically about his well-being and for a medical and psychological assessment to be done," MacKay added. ``We're going to continue to provide consular access as we do in the case of all Canadians."

INDEX:Defence, International, Justice, Politics

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 77

KABUL – Jack Idema, an American imprisoned in Afghanistan for running a private jail for terror suspects, has been set free.

The chief of Policharki prison where Idema was held says the American got out of jail earlier this month and has left Afghanistan.

Idema, a former Green Beret, was pardoned by President Hamid Karzai in March as part of a general amnesty.

Rahim Ahmadzai, Idema's Afghan lawyer, says the American left the Afghan prison on June 2.

The Policharki prison chief says Idema wanted to stay in Afghanistan but was denied a visa.

(AP)

INDEX:Defence, International

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 108

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Fellow soldiers are remembering slain Canadian soldier Trooper Darryl Caswell as a man who always put a smile on the faces of those around him.

Caswell is the latest Canadian casualty in Afghanistan. He died Monday when his Coyote struck a roadside bomb 40 kilometres north of Kandahar.

Trooper Steve Davidson says his best friend always had something witty or hilarious to say that made those around him feel great.

Cpl. Wade Wick says being in Caswell's crew was probably the best experience he's had in Afghanistan, saying he was always on the ball, and always ready to help.

Wick was one of the two soldiers injured by the blast.

He says they knew the risks of their job were real. They were simply thankful for every day they had together.

(BN)

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(BN)

INDEX:Defence, International

DATE: 2007.06.13

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 95

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Slain Canadian soldier Trooper Darryl Caswell is on his way home.

International troops lined the tarmac tonight at Kanadhar Airfield to honour the 25-year-old.

The pain of his loss was clear in the eyes of his fellow soldiers, who tightly gripped his casket and each other as they slowly marched toward the Hercules aircraft that brings fallen soldiers back to Canada.

Major Malcolm Berry remembers Caswell as a pratical joker with a `great sense of ha-ha' and says his influence and standards will live on for all who knew and loved him.

Caswell died Monday when his Coyote vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb.

He is the 57th Canadian soldier to be killed in Afghanistan.

(BN)

PM faces cabinet decisions

IDNUMBER 200706140176
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A16
BYLINE: James Travers
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 548

This spring of discontent is about to become Stephen Harper's difficult summer. Before fall the Prime Minister must accomplish something at least as problematic in politics as in business: Add freshness to a product advertised as new but looking very old.

In this case the merchandise is Conservative rule and one strategy is to bring it back to market in September with a throne speech setting second-generation priorities. Another getting less public but more private attention is to shuffle a cabinet that's mostly inept when not anonymous.

That won't be easy. Moving the few good performers is risky and Harper's look-at-me tactics keep all but a few colleagues from showcasing their talents.

But there's urgency for the Prime Minister beyond applying a veneer over fissures exposed by the Atlantic accord, income trusts and this government's surfacing mean streak. Harper's administration is a weakling on the issue demanding the most muscle – Afghanistan.

Gordon O'Connor, Peter MacKay and Josee Verner are the government's 3Ds of defence, diplomacy and development. The first of the three is a disaster, the other two disappointments.

Of the three, the defence minister is responsible for the deepest self-inflicted wounds. A former soldier seemingly incapable of making the transition to civilian oversight, O'Connor's superficial grasp of the portfolio, particularly the treatment of prisoners and bereaved families, is crippling for a government and country at war.

Summer job one for a prime minister who would rather chew broken glass than admit a mistake is to find a face-saving place for the man who should never have been minister. The Treasury Board is being discussed even though O'Connor's presence could only slow its transition into a management innovator.

MacKay's towel-snapping locker room charm would make him a better fit at defence than cerebral foreign affairs where – oh please say this anecdote is apocryphal – he startled cabinet by struggling to locate Geneva in Switzerland. But a strong defence performer is so desperately needed that Harper may opt for a two-fer by shifting competent Jim Flaherty out of finance where he's an equalization and income trust target.

In contrast, the Verner problem is in scale with her modest portfolio. Under attack for preferring cheque writing to risky projects and for failing to make aid synonymous with Afghanistan, the Canadian International Development Agency needs a fresh ministerial face to make the mission seem more about reconstruction.

But Verner also personifies Harper's problem. It's as hard to find a Conservative better able to argue the Afghanistan case in Quebec as it is to force-fit other cabinet square pegs into this government's gaping round holes.

That wouldn't be so challenging if petty political jealousy and Alberta's Conservative overload wasn't keeping capable Diane Ablonczy on the sidelines. And it would be no worry at all if Harper had more than one Jim Prentice to reward with even more responsibility than perpetually vexed Indian affairs.

Still, those realities torture all prime ministers. Rarely is there a surplus of ability. But Harper no longer enjoys the luxury of excuses. He must regain control of the national agenda by fall, or Tories, like their immediate Liberal predecessors, will force voters to choose between the lesser of evils.

That worked for Jean Chretien but not for Paul Martin and must now be self-evident to as serious a student of politics as Harper.

James Travers' national affairs column appears Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

Ottawa waits on appeal of Khadr ruling

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DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A23
BYLINE: Les Whittington
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 163

The federal government will wait until "the appeals process has been exhausted" before asking U.S. authorities to release Omar Khadr into Canadian custody, says Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay.

But he said he has spoken to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about Khadr, the 20-year-old Canadian held in Guantanamo Bay, who had charges of war crimes against him dismissed by a military judge last week. "I asked specifically about his well-being and for a medical and psychological assessment to be done," MacKay said.

He said he also requested that Khadr be given greater access to family, lawyers and education materials.

Canadian consular officials will continue to speak with Khadr, MacKay added.

U.S. authorities have formally asked a military judge to reconsider the decision to drop charges against Khadr, who was captured in 2002 in Afghanistan after a firefight with U.S. forces.

Today, Amnesty International and Lawyers Against The War are releasing an open letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper calling on the federal government to secure the immediate release of Khadr from Guantanamo Bay.

Les Whittington

Air force to beef up its helicopters; Existing Griffons will be refitted with machine guns, rockets until gunships arrive

IDNUMBER 200706140165
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Met
SECTION: News
PAGE: A19
BYLINE: Bruce Campion-Smith
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 293

Canada's air force wants to buy a fleet of gunship helicopters to protect its new transport choppers as they haul troops and equipment in enemy zones.

But until these new attack choppers arrive, the air force plans to outfit its existing Griffon helicopters with machine guns and rockets to do the job.

The danger facing the big transport helicopters was driven home last month when insurgents downed a U.S. Chinook chopper in Afghanistan, killing all seven people onboard, including a Canadian military photographer.

"We have officially recognized that there is a requirement to have a helicopter that would accompany the medium- to heavy-lift helicopter ... in a battlefield type environment," said air force spokesperson Capt. Jim Hutcheson.

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor last summer unveiled the Conservatives' \$4.7 billion plan to buy 16 medium-to-heavy lift helicopters, likely the Boeing Chinook.

While the twin-rotor Chinooks will have their own anti-missile gear and other defensive aids, air force officials say they're still too valuable an asset to fly around a battlefield unguarded.

The Chinooks are about the size of a transport truck and can haul more than 30 soldiers.

"They're obviously an attractive target and you want to do everything you can to protect it and its occupants," Hutcheson said.

As a result, the air force has launched a program to outfit some of its Griffon choppers to serve as flying bodyguards to the Chinooks when they arrive in the air force fleet in 2011.

Under the program, it's expected the Griffons, already able to carry machine guns, will be outfitted with extra armament as well as infrared and optical sensors to spot enemy forces on the ground.

In the long-term, the air force hopes to buy helicopters designed as flying gunships.

"Further down the line, they would be looking at a helicopter that was more specifically dedicated and designed for that role," Hutcheson said.

The air force was making plans for this new capability before the downing of the Chinook last month. But Hutcheson said the crash drives home the need to give the Chinooks some protection.

"Certainly we can learn lessons from the experience in Afghanistan," he said.

Taliban, Ottawa both target Quebec; Historian says insurgents aim to hit Van Doos and sway opinions; defence department plans PR blitz

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DATE: 2007.06.14

EDITION: Met

SECTION: News

PAGE: A01

ILLUSTRATION: Aaron Lynett toronto star Canadian soldiers at CFB Wainwright in Alberta prepare an "injured" soldier for helicopter evacuation after a roadside bomb exercise, part of final exercises before troops are deployed to Afghanistan. ;

BYLINE: Bruce Campion-Smith

SOURCE: Toronto Star

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 688

Quebec-based troops poised to deploy to Afghanistan will be targeted by Taliban insurgents who want to cause casualties and erode public support for the mission in Canada, a noted historian says.

But the defence department wants to shore up wobbly public support in Quebec before their deployment, with plans for a goodwill blitz in the province that includes feting them in a parade and having them appear at a CFL football game.

As part of that publicity blitz, Quebec-based soldiers will visit a dozen of the largest cities in the province to present them with a flag from the departing contingent to fly for the duration of the deployment as a show of support.

In return, the military will fly the municipal flags in Kandahar.

"We're trying to make a public event out of that so that we can engage the public and try to explain once again what the mission is all about. It's a challenge," said spokesperson Lt.-Cmdr. Hubert Genest.

Many of the deploying troops will be in the stands on June 21 when the Montreal Alouettes face the Toronto Argonauts in a CFL game at Molson Stadium. The next day, the departing troops will take part in a parade in Quebec City – despite the protests of some in the community.

Historian Jack Granatstein said insurgents know that opinion in Canada is split and will try to capitalize on that as more than 2,000 troops from CFB Valcartier, near Quebec City, begin to deploy over the coming months.

"I fully expect the Taliban to target the Van Doos," he said yesterday in an interview, referring to the famed Royal 22nd Regiment.

"I think (the Van Doos are) going to do very well militarily but I think they will take casualties and that's the difficulty."

Indeed, public support has dropped steadily as casualties – 57 Canadian soldiers killed so far – mounted over the past year.

By September, the Quebec-based troops will have arrived on the front lines in Kandahar, marking the first time they have gone to the region as a battle group. At the heart of the deployment are close to 1,000 soldiers from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Van Doos.

But support for the mission is lower in Quebec than any other region in the country, prompting concerns that any casualties during the six-month deployment could turn public opinion even further against the Afghan mission.

Already, Quebec-based anti-war activists are sending individual letters to 3,000 Canadian military families urging soldiers to refuse their upcoming deployment.

Just this week, a poll showed that the vast majority of Canadians want the country's military mission in Afghanistan to end as scheduled in 2009. The survey by Decima Research found that only 26 per cent of respondents believed the military mission should be extended.

Retired major-general Lewis MacKenzie said insurgents a world away can easily track the ups and downs of public opinion.

"The Taliban, particularly with the Internet, will know what the centre of gravity is in each country," he said.

But while insurgents may want to strike hard at the Quebec-based troops, MacKenzie doubts they have the ability to carry out a concerted campaign, noting that the much-hyped spring Taliban offensive ended in a "whimper.

"Maybe they will attempt but whether they'll be successful, I certainly hope not and I don't think they will because the Van Doos do a pretty good job of looking after themselves," MacKenzie said.

Liberal MP Denis Coderre (Bourassa) doesn't think that public opinion in Quebec will collapse when the first casualties come home.

"We wish the best but if there are some casualties of war ... even if it's the Van Doos, the reaction will be the same," said Coderre, the Liberal's defence critic.

"I don't feel that because it will be someone from Quebec that it will have a huge impact or a worse impact than if those kids were coming from Gagetown or Petawawa."

As for the troops, they're keen to get on the ground and get on with the mission, said Genest, who will be accompanying the Quebec contingent to Kandahar.

"We're all very excited to go, we're looking to go ... if we could leave tomorrow we'd like to do that because we've been preparing for months," he said.

"We're not trying to push away those concerns that exist in Canada and Quebec"

Still, the military is sensitive to public opinion, especially the mood in Quebec, and is taking steps to raise the profile of the mission in the province prior to the deployment.

"We feel that we have a part to play in trying to inform the public about what we're trying to achieve," Genest said.

"If those groups who are criticizing the mission have a right to express their views in the protest, we exercise our right in what we think in parading and saying goodbye to our loved ones."

Giving a voice to our community

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DATE: 2007.06.14
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SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: AA06
BYLINE: BOB HEPBURN
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 930

Several nights ago, the members of this year's Toronto Star community editorial board met for the last time. Since September, the 12 members, who were selected from 600 applicants, had been meeting regularly to discuss issues ranging from municipal elections to problems faced by new immigrants to child poverty.

The board, which has operated for seven years, is meant to allow Greater Toronto Area readers from different ethnic, age and religious backgrounds to tell us what is important to them, their friends and their communities.

At the final meeting, I asked the members to write a note reflecting on their experience on the board.

Here, in their own words, is part of what they said:

Maryam Akrami is a university student who immigrated to Canada in 2001 from Afghanistan: "I was able to voice some of my concerns and opinions in our meetings and through my articles. I also got to know 11 individuals from different communities in the GTA and learned about their concerns and views. I learned that despite our differences, we have much in common and we all share similar concerns most of the time."

Tania Baldwin is originally from Honduras and lives in Ajax: "I'm very proud of being one of the first Hispanic women to be part of the board. I hope to have inspired others to have a chance to voice their own opinions. I'd also like to thank the Star for giving young immigrant women a chance to have our voices heard."

Estella Cohen came to Toronto 40 years ago from Morocco and now works for the Ontario government: "I learned so much from every board member. I was very impressed with the younger folks and it's reassuring to know they will be our future leaders. Being able to write for the Star has been the 'icing on the cake.' It was a pleasure to hear from people that I hadn't heard from in years tell me that they enjoyed reading my articles."

Rahaf Harfoush is a recent university graduate who was born in Syria and works for a research firm. She was unable to attend the final meeting. During the year, she wrote about work-life balance and how, as an Arab, she wanted to encourage members of her community "to engage in meaningful dialogue with other communities."

Andres Laxamana is a Filipino immigrant who has a medical degree and works for the Ontario government: "This experience has allowed me to meet other people from the GTA that in all likelihood I would have never had the opportunity to interact with. Each member brought a different perspective and life experience. In getting to know them, many of my stereotypes and assumptions were challenged and in some cases blown out of the water."

Shawn Meikle is a university student from Pickering who is also a member of the Canadian Armed Forces reserves: "It opened my eyes to the mosaic of communities in Toronto. I was amazed how different people can approach different issues. At the same time it was reassuring that despite our diversity there seemed to be certain issues we could achieve consensus on. It shows the Star's commitment to better understanding the community we live in from the perspective of everyday people."

Enez Perkins immigrated to Canada last summer and lives in Ajax: "The board served to not only expose me to the widest cross section of Canadian society, but also reassured me that we are, for the most part, of one accord on issues affecting our lives. The board definitely serves the purpose of penetrating groups that ordinarily would not have come to the fore."

Gary Pieters was raised in Guyana and is a vice-principal at a west-end school: "My term on the board was an empowering and transformational experience. The experience broadened my sphere of civic responsibility by letting me demonstrate community leadership in pursuing and shaping opinion on issues of public importance that resulted in social change."

Kash Sayed is a Mississauga high school teacher whose parents are from Pakistan: "Being on the board was a great learning and growing experience. The chance to write for a huge newspaper was in many ways a dream come true. I always feel humbled when my column is printed because I know how many smart people are out there who would love a chance to voice their opinion and how I was so lucky to participate in this program."

Sri B. Sri-Skanda-Rajah is a Tamil Canadian born in Sri Lanka who is a retired development banker: "The Star showed little concern for the thousands of Tamils and dozens of Sinhalese who are being killed in Sri Lanka by the inhuman policies being pursued by the racist xenophobic Sinhalese Buddhist government. My experience has been a disappointment."

John Stevenson lives in Oakville and is a former corporate president: "The experience was both enjoyable and informative. The board can be an excellent focus group. I was quite impressed with the good environment. We feel that we are actually contributing."

Karen Zhou lives in Scarborough and is a graduate student: "I was struck by how we were genuinely interested in hearing what each other had to say. Each of us has our own issues which we care about, some universal issues which appeal to everybody, such as altruism, and some ethnic/cultural issues, such as the isolationism of new Chinese immigrants in the GTA, which would not have been adequately addressed, if at all, had it not been for the Star."

In the next several weeks, the Star will start the search for the next board. Details on how to apply will appear on this page.

Shortage of reserve soldiers looms

IDNUMBER 200706140031
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: C7
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 513

OTTAWA — The Canadian Forces, squeezed by the Afghanistan conflict, may be forced to cancel half the training courses for regular and reserve soldiers scheduled for this summer in Western Canada.

The training squeeze, caused by the unavailability of qualified officers to teach troops, could cause a shortage of reservists in 2009 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper decides to extend the mission past February of that year, according to one reserve officer.

"We're still struggling to find trainers, there's no question about that," said Lt.-Col. Tom Manley, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders reserve unit, which has generated a disproportionate number of volunteers for the Afghanistan mission.

"And there's a chance we simply may not get everyone trained that could potentially deploy, so we may have to leave some behind (in 2009) because they didn't get the training they needed," he said this week.

Manley said the trainer shortage is the result of so many experienced soldiers — who would normally lead training sessions — preparing for the next Afghanistan rotation headed by Western Canadian soldiers in the first half of 2008.

Manley spoke about the shortage of trainers at an appearance in Calgary in February before the Senate national security committee.

Col. Art Wriedt, commanding officer of the Calgary-based 41 Canadian Brigade Group, told senators that recruiting and training reservists for a possible 2009 mission is a "big worry."

The national defence department's Web site says only 18 of 40 summer courses, scheduled in Alberta, B.C. and Manitoba, are expected to go ahead.

Of the rest, six are likely to be cancelled and 16 are flagged yellow as courses that "may be cancelled."

But Lt.-Col. Shane Bridgeman, a regular force officer at Land Forces Western Area in Edmonton, cautioned that many, if not all, of those courses could go ahead.

Reservists — volunteer soldiers who take leaves from their jobs — have typically made up 12 to 14 per cent of the 2,500-person contingent in Afghanistan.

But reserve units are under increased pressure to find recruits and are expected to make up 20 per cent of the

rotation in the first half of 2008, which will be led by a battalion from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment in Edmonton. The Princess Pats would also be the lead regiment in Afghanistan in the second half of 2009 if the mission is extended.

Bridgeman said the army has faced similar training challenges in the recent past, and said the comments from the reserve officers reflect the growing pressure on that increasingly important component of the Canadian military.

"The system is routinely under stress," he said.

"We're quite used to managing the priorities. This is probably the first time that individual (reserve) units have seen that strain to this extent, because they're generating more people for overseas than they ever have before. Suddenly it's all apparent to them."

Defence department officials, citing a recent commitment from army commander Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, say the availability of trainers fluctuates, but the military has always been able to meet its commitments.

"General Leslie has said that yes, the army is stretched, but that we are able to maintain our commitments out to February of '09," said spokesman Maj. Daryl Morrell.

"It's premature for us to go out and speculate on any kind of mandate, past what the government has given us."

Morrell said soldiers training for 2009 overseas missions are preparing for any assignment given to them by the government.

Vancouver Sun

'Drums' draw Taliban

SOURCETAG 0706140826
PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 16
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 550

Foreign and Afghan insurgents drawn by the sound and fury of battle are in the northern region of Kandahar province to fight coalition forces trying to reassert government control, says the commander of the Canadian battle group.

Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said yesterday recent fighting in the Sha Wali Kot district has attracted Taliban insurgents from across the province as well as Arab and Chechen fighters from abroad.

"They are drawn to the sounds of the drums and the guns so that's where they are moving at this point," Walker told reporters at the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield.

Earlier this year, the governor of neighbouring Helmand province had estimated there were at least 700 foreign fighters there from Chechnya, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Walker said he couldn't estimate the number of foreign insurgents in Kandahar province, the main area of operations for Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan.

CANADIAN TROOPS

But the pool of rebel forces in Sha Wali Kot itself has become so large that international forces are prompted into taking action.

Operation Adalat was launched earlier this month with the goal of rooting out insurgents from the area and preventing them from moving to the relatively more secure areas in the south of Kandahar province.

Canadian troops are part of Operation Adalat, returning to an area they'd left a year ago.

The move south had left a vacuum for the Taliban to return to the area, Col. Mike Cessford, deputy commander of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan, said earlier this week. But he maintained it was the right decision at the time, as the priority then was to focus on the more densely populated southern portions of the province.

As Canadians were pulling back from the district last year, four soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb. Now, another has died as fighting was flaring up once again.

Trooper Darryl Caswell, 25, was killed when his Coyote armoured vehicle struck an improvised explosive device on Monday. He was part of a convoy heading to resupply Canadian troops involved in Operation Adalat.

Canadians are also engaged in battles elsewhere.

"We've been busier in the last two or three weeks than we were for the first half of the tour but I have to say the attacks that we are dealing with are more sporadic," Walker said.

On Wednesday, Canadian troops were involved in a two-hour firefight in Zhari district west of Kandahar city, he said. There was no mention of any coalition casualties.

There has also been an upsurge in the number of roadside bombs found, Walker said.

On the day Caswell was killed, combat teams came into contact with other improvised explosive devices the Zhari, Panjwaii, Kandahar City and lower Sha Wali Kot areas of the province.

No other injuries or deaths resulted.

"For the most part, the attacks we're involved with, the skirmishes we are involved with are of our making," Walker said.

Taliban forces "seem to be moving through, transiting through" instead of staying, Walker said, suggesting it's happening in large part due to villagers refusing to offer them shelter for fear of being caught up in fighting.

He relayed one story of a village bringing the Qur'an out to a checkpoint and reading passages from it to convey to the Taliban they weren't welcome in their homes.

"The fact that they have the strength and conviction to go out and face the people that are in the area and convince them to move on, it takes a lot of courage, a lot of moral courage," Walker said.

"They are putting their life on the line."

He also said efforts by NATO's International Security Assistance Force to target the Taliban leadership has had the desired effect.

"I think what we're seeing is a lack of unity of effort and focus," he said.

"I know there's a lot of infighting within the Taliban ranks itself and that all adds up to what we're seeing right now."

On Wednesday, ISAF announced its troops had killed Mullah Mahmood Baluch, considered by coalition forces to be a senior Taliban leader in Helmand and Nimroz.

He was killed in an air strike on June 9, while he was attempting to move a convoy of weapons and ammunition into Helmand province, the coalition said.

"He was a cruel and vengeful man who did not have the people's welfare in mind," said a coalition statement.

Join fighting in northern Kandahar KEYWORDS=WORLD

Militants rushing to join Kandahar fighting

SOURCETAG 0706140690
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DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 9
ILLUSTRATION: photo of MIKE CESSFORD Vacuum left
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 249

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'Evidence' Iran aids Taliban

SOURCETAG 0706140689

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DATE: 2007.06.14

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 9

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: PARIS

WORD COUNT: 192

NATO has intercepted Iranian weapons shipments to Afghanistan's Taliban insurgents, providing evidence Iran is violating international law, a senior U.S. diplomat said yesterday.

"There's irrefutable evidence the Iranians are now doing this," U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns said.

"It's certainly coming from the government of Iran. It's coming from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard corps command, which is a basic unit of the Iranian government."

Later, Burns said NATO must act to stop the shipments.

The Iran–Afghanistan frontier is "a very long border. But the Iranians need to know that we are there and that we're going to oppose this."

'VERY TROUBLESOME'

Burns did not give details on the scope of the alleged Iranian shipments, although he appeared to indicate that they were limited. "It is not going to turn the tide against us, but it is very troublesome, it is illegal under international law ... and the Iranians need to stop it."

U.S. Army Gen. Dan McNeill said Taliban fighters are showing signs of better training, using combat techniques comparable to "an advanced Western military" in ambushes of U.S. Special Forces soldiers.

"It is clear that the Taliban is receiving support, including arms from ... elements of the Iranian regime," British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote in the May 31 edition of the Economist.

Iran denies the accusation, saying it makes no sense for a Shiite–led government to help the Taliban's fundamentalist Sunni movement. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Slain trooper sent home Ramp ceremony held for Canuck soldier Darryl Caswell, who was killed in action

SOURCETAG 0706140687

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.06.14

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 9

ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos 1. photo by Stephanie Levitz, CP Corp. Wade Wick, 25, leads friends and fellow soldiers of slain Trooper Darryl Caswell down the tarmac in Afghanistan yesterday. They escorted his casket into a plane that will bring him back home to Canada. Caswell was killed on Monday by a roadside bomb. 2. photo of DARRYL CASWELL Killed by bomb

BYLINE: STEPHANIE LEVITZ, THE CANADIAN PRESS

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 252

Memories of Trooper Darryl Caswell bring smiles to his fellow soldiers in Afghanistan; the lost promise of what could have been brings pain.

It was evident on the faces of eight of his fellow soldiers yesterday as they solemnly marched Caswell's casket past row upon row of coalition troops standing at attention at Kandahar Airfield.

They tightly gripped the coffin and each other as they made their way to the Hercules transport plane flying Caswell home to Canada.

Among them was Trooper Steve Davidson, 20, who had planned to a house with Caswell to be free of the cramped confines of living in military barracks.

He was joined by Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, who had struck a deal with Caswell to start a didgeridoo band. They had bought the Aboriginal musical instruments on a recent trip to Australia, where Caswell fulfilled a life-long goal to dive at the Great Barrier Reef.

Caswell, 25, died Monday when an armoured vehicle he was riding in struck a roadside bomb about 40 km north of Kandahar.

"Being in his crew over here was probably the best experience I ever had with a guy," said Wick, who was injured in the blast that killed Caswell.

DARKEST MOMENTS

Even in the darkest moments on the battlefield, Caswell always had a sense of humour, the men said. He was quick with a joke from one of their favourite movies or a quip to ease the tension.

"He was always trying to get the best out of everybody, bring out the best, don't take anything for granted," Wick said.

Slain trooper sent home Ramp ceremony held for Canuck soldier Darryl Caswell, who was killed in action

They were lessons Davidson took to heart. The pair had been best friends since meeting in training, and Davidson said Caswell made him the man he is today.

"He pushed me, he pushed to do things that I would never have done before. He pushed me to be a better person, a better man, he pushed me to be a better soldier, he pushed me just to love life," he said.
KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

General Dynamics staff saluted An army commander lauds the makers of military equipment used in Afghanistan.

SOURCETAG 0706140583

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.06.14

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Business

PAGE: D1

ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos by Sue Reeve, Sun Media 1. TROOP BOOSTERS: Employees of General Dynamics Land Systems–Canada showed their support for the troops in Afghanistan by making a video for the Canadian Forces Army News at the plant. The employees, who make the light armoured vehicles, gathered yesterday to listen to Lieutenant–Colonel Omer Lavoie, who recently returned from a deployment as commanding officer of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment battle group in Afghanistan. 2. photo of OMER LAVOIE Canadian forces "are the envy of our allies."

BYLINE: VERA OVANIN, SUN MEDIA

WORD COUNT: 271

A former Canadian commander in Afghanistan paid tribute yesterday in London to defence workers who help build the equipment Canada is using in its mission there.

Standing by an armoured vehicle, while Eminem played in the background, Lt.–Col. Omer Lavoie told about 800 General Dynamics Land Systems employees the Canadian forces "are the envy of our allies when it comes to the equipment."

The London plant, a division of U.S. defence giant General Dynamics, builds light armoured vehicles for Canada and other nations, including the United States.

"The work you do here is a significant contribution to the fight in Afghanistan and our commitment to the mission," said Lavoie, former commanding officer of the 1st Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment battle group in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

In a 30–minute speech, he praised the troops inside the Oxford Street plant.

Canadian forces in Afghanistan have been fighting remnants of the former Taliban regime, fundamentalist Muslims, since 2002 as part of a United Nations effort.

Lavoie recently returned from Kandahar where he lead the first land combat offensive in the history of NATO.

"It was the first (ground offensive) in 50 years and it was under Canadian command," he said of the Operation Medusa. "We were outnumbered 6–to–1 by the Taliban and we still managed to beat them."

Lavoie said the greatest morale boost for the troops was seeing Afghani refugees return to their villages.

He also praised Canadian troops for fighting the mujahideens, or extremist Muslim freedom fighters, something the Soviet army failed at during its war in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

"The life of a soldier in Afghanistan is 95 per cent boredom and five per cent sheer terror. They are facing dust, heat, danger, fear and loneliness," he said.

Names of soldiers killed in Afghanistan appeared one-by-one on the screen while the Rolling Stones' song, Painted Black, played.

The Land Systems employees were instructed not to speak to the media, one said.

When Lavoie was asked what could be done to improve weaknesses in the equipment, he answered, "Why don't I just tell the enemy what the weak areas are? It's a stupid question."

Forces face shortage of reserve soldiers; Afghanistan mission halts training courses

IDNUMBER 200706140193
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
KEYWORDS: WAR
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 447

The Canadian Forces, squeezed by the Afghanistan conflict, may be forced to cancel half the training courses for regular and reserve soldiers scheduled for this summer in western Canada.

The training squeeze, caused by the unavailability of qualified officers to teach troops, could cause a shortage of reservists in 2009 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper decides to extend the mission past February of that year, according to one reserve officer.

"We're still struggling to find trainers, there's no question about that," said Lt.-Col. Tom Manley, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders reserve unit, which has generated a disproportionate number of volunteers for Afghanistan.

"And there's a chance we simply may not get everyone trained that could potentially deploy, so we may have to leave some behind (in 2009) because they didn't get the training they needed," he said.

The trainer shortage was the result of so many experienced soldiers — who would normally lead training sessions — preparing for the next Afghanistan rotation headed by western Canadian soldiers in the first half of 2008.

The national defence department's website says only 18 of 40 summer courses, scheduled in Alberta, B.C. and Manitoba, are expected to go ahead.

Of the rest, six are likely to be cancelled and 16 are flagged as courses that "may be cancelled."

But Lt.-Col. Shane Bridgeman, chief of training for army in Western Canada, doesn't expect the Afghanistan conflict will have a significant impact on training scheduled for this summer.

Courses for reservists and regular forces in Western Canada — based solely in Wainwright, Alberta and Shilo, Manitoba — often do depend on qualified officers for instruction who may be less available to teach because of Afghanistan.

But, Bridgeman explains, instructors can, and will, also be found within the regular armed and air forces to help out.

The average number of courses per summer, he adds, is usually about 40 in Wainwright and Shilo combined.

"We expect we'll probably have about the same this summer too," Bridgeman said. "These things are assigned as a priority and we've served the courses on that priority.

"Our commander is now seeking out more instructors."

Reservists — volunteer soldiers who take leave from their jobs — have typically made up 12 to 14 per cent of the 2,500-person contingent in Afghanistan.

But reserve units are under increased pressure to find recruits and are expected to make up 20 per cent of the rotation in the first half of 2008, which will be led by a battalion from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment in Edmonton.

The Princess Pats would also be the lead regiment in Afghanistan in the second half of 2009 if the mission is extended.

Bridgeman said the army has faced similar training challenges in the recent past, and said the comments from the reserve officers reflect the growing pressure on that increasingly important component of the Canadian military.

"The system is routinely under stress," he said. "This is probably the first time that individual (reserve) units have seen that strain to this extent, because they're generating more people for overseas than they ever have before."

With files from Eva Ferguson

Slain trooper made tattoo vow; Buddies commemorated fallen friends

IDNUMBER 200706140191
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 426

Trooper Darryl Caswell and Cpl. Wade Wick, crew members in the same Coyote armoured vehicle, had made a vow. The two close friends would each buy tattoos to commemorate buddies from their unit of the Royal Canadian Dragoons who were killed in an explosion in April.

Wick said Wednesday he is more determined than ever to get the memorial tattoo when he returns to Canada in August.

Now, though, he will have to add another name: that of Caswell himself, killed Monday when the Coyote hit a powerful mine.

For members of the Dragoons reconnaissance squadron, whose job often involves pushing ahead into uncharted territory, such tragedies are becoming a fact of life in Afghanistan.

Caswell's crew, especially, could not ignore the reality, since their junior status meant they were almost always the lead vehicles in convoys, and most likely to trigger a mine or be targeted by some other sort of bomb.

In March, they were hit with an improvised explosive device that shook them up but did not hurt anyone badly. Later, they were in an ambush.

"After the first IED strike . . . it was just such a great relief to hear everybody's voice over the (intercom), and we just laughed about it for days," said Wick.

"We all knew the risks. . . . Us being the first to be hit by everything was a well-known, accepted risk. We'd wake up every day, look at each other and we'd be thankful we still had another day, and we'd start afresh."

Caswell was killed Monday evening as his Coyote led a resupply convoy along a remote and bumpy road up to a base used by U.S. infantry and Canadian artillery units north of Kandahar city. He was the 57th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan since 2002.

Wick and another crew member were both injured.

Hundreds of soldiers from several countries showed up early Thursday morning for a ramp ceremony that saw Caswell's remains loaded onto a Hercules transport for the first leg of the trip home.

He was known to his comrades "as a brave man, who lived by the seat of his pants, a seriously dedicated soldier always stepping forward to volunteer," Maj. Malcolm Berry, an army chaplain, told the crowd.

Wick and Trooper Steve Davidson, the fallen soldier's best friend, lauded their buddy Wednesday as someone who would think of others first and be quick to lift spirits with his wit and good humour.

"He's just been an incredible friend to me. . . . I can safely say he made me the man I am today," said Davidson, another member of the recce squadron, as it is known colloquially. "I don't know what I'll do without him."

Caswell's nickname was Ricky Bobby, after the main character in the movie Talladega Nights, a comedy about race car drivers.

"He always wanted to go fast," said Wick. "We'd constantly be yelled at over the net to slow down, because he just wanted to tear up the roads."

Canadians face flood of foreign fighters

IDNUMBER 200706140190
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
KEYWORDS: WAR
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 251

Chechen and Arab fighters have flooded into the latest hot spot for Taliban activity in southern Afghanistan, helping turn it into an insurgent "sanctuary," a senior Canadian army officer said Wednesday.

Unknown numbers of foreign militants have infiltrated the Shahwali Kot district north of Kandahar city in recent weeks, said Lt.-Col. Rob Walker, who commands the Canadian battle group.

A soldier from Bracebridge, Ont., Trooper Darryl Caswell, was killed Monday while trying to bring supplies to Canadian and American forces battling those fighters in the upper part of Shahwali Kot.

"The insurgents decided they are going to mass within that area, and there are a lot of foreign fighters there — Chechens and Arabs," said Walker. "It's a bit of a sanctuary, so ISAF (the International Security Assistance Force) has decided we need to go up there to confront them, so that's where the fighting is."

Soldiers of the U.S. 82nd Airborne and American special forces have been combating insurgents in the district.

They have been aided by Canadian artillery units, whose M-777s are the most advanced big guns in the Afghan theatre, capable of hurling shells up to 30 kilometres.

The NATO troops are having an impact on the imported fighters, said Walker, adding that reports suggest the gunmen "are taking some pretty good losses over the last couple of weeks since they've been there."

Reports of Arabs and other foreign combatants in Afghanistan always strike an ominous note, suggesting there is broader support for the insurgency, at least outside the country. It is not the first time, moreover, that NATO has reported such sightings.

Taliban answering call of war – Canuck commander

SOURCETAG 0706140440
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 39
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 384

Foreign and Afghan insurgents, drawn by the sound and fury of battle, are in the northern region of Kandahar province to fight coalition forces trying to reassert government control, says the commander of the Canadian battle group.

Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said yesterday recent fighting in the Sha Wali Kot district has attracted Taliban insurgents from across the province as well as Arab and Chechen fighters from abroad.

"They are drawn to the sounds of the drums and the guns, so that's where they are moving at this point," Walker told reporters at the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield.

Earlier this year, the governor of neighbouring Helmand province had estimated there were at least 700 foreign fighters there from Chechnya, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Walker said he couldn't estimate the number of foreign insurgents in Kandahar province, the main area of operations for Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan.

REBEL FORCES RISING

But the pool of rebel forces in Sha Wali Kot itself has become so large that international forces are prompted into taking action.

Operation Adalat was launched earlier this month with the goal of rooting out insurgents from the area and preventing them from moving to the relatively more secure areas in the south of Kandahar province.

Canadian troops are part of Operation Adalat, returning to an area they'd left a year ago.

The move south had left a vacuum for the Taliban to return to the area, Col. Mike Cessford, deputy commander of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan, said earlier this week. But he maintained it was the right decision at the time, as the priority then was to focus on the more densely populated southern portions of the province.

CANADIAN CASUALTIES

As Canadians were pulling back from the district last year, four soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb. Now, another has died as fighting was flaring up once again. Trooper Darryl Caswell, 25, was killed when his Coyote armoured vehicle struck an improvised explosive device on Monday.

Canadians are also engaged in battles elsewhere.

"We've been busier in the last two or three weeks than we were for the first half of the tour but I have to say the attacks that we are dealing with are more sporadic," Walker said.

Yesterday, Canadian troops were involved in a two-hour firefight in Zhari district west of Kandahar city, he said. There was no mention of any coalition casualties. There has also been an upsurge in the number of roadside bombs found, Walker said.

On the day Caswell was killed, combat teams came into contact with other improvised explosive devices in the Zhari, Panjwairi, Kandahar City and lower Sha Wali Kot areas of the province. There were no other injuries or deaths. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Slain soldier bound for home Darryl Caswell – Canada's latest casualty in the war on terror

SOURCETAG 0706140439
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 39

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Stephanie Levitz, CP Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, leads the friends and fellow soldiers of slain trooper Darryl Caswell down the tarmac at Kandahar, Afghanistan airfield as they escort his casket into the plane that will bring him back to Canada yesterday. Caswell, 25, died Monday when an armoured vehicle he was riding in struck a roadside bomb about 40 km north of Kandahar.

BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 82

Slain Canadian soldier trooper Darryl Caswell is on his way home.

International troops lined the tarmac tonight at Kanadhar Airfield to honour the 25-year-old.

The pain of his loss was clear in the eyes of his fellow soldiers, who tightly gripped his casket and each other as they slowly marched toward the Hercules aircraft that brings fallen soldiers back to Canada.

Major Malcolm Berry remembers Caswell as a practical joker with a "great sense of ha-ha" and says his influence and standards will live on for all who knew and loved him.

Caswell died Monday when his Coyote vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb.

He is the 57th Canadian soldier to be killed in Afghanistan. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Pals of slain soldier cherish past memories

SOURCETAG 0706140318
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 21
ILLUSTRATION: photo of DARRYL CASWELL Killed in action
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 193

Memories of Trooper Darryl Caswell bring smiles to his fellow—soldiers in Afghanistan — the lost promise of what could have been brings pain.

It was evident on the faces of eight of his fellow—soldiers yesterday in Afghanistan as they solemnly marched Caswell's casket past row upon row of coalition troops standing at attention at Kandahar Airfield.

They tightly gripped the coffin and each other as they made their way to the Hercules transport plane flying Caswell home to Canada.

Among them was Trooper Steve Davidson, 20, who had planned to buy a house with Caswell to be free of the cramped confines of living in military barracks.

He was joined by Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, who had struck a deal with Caswell to start a didgeridoo band. They had bought the Aboriginal musical instruments on a recent trip to Australia, where Caswell fulfilled a life—long goal to dive at the Great Barrier Reef.

Caswell, 25, died Monday when an armoured vehicle he was riding in struck a roadside bomb about 40 km north of Kandahar.

"Being in his crew over here was probably the best experience I ever had with a guy," said Wick, who was injured in the blast that killed Caswell.

Even in the darkest moments, Caswell always had a sense of humour, the men said. He was quick with a joke from one of their favourite movies or a quip to ease the tension.

"He was always trying to get the best out of everybody," Wick said yesterday. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Fallen soldier honoured

SOURCETAG 0706140290

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.06.14

EDITION: Early

SECTION: News

PAGE: 3

ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos 1. photo by Stephanie Levitz, CP Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, leads the friends and fellow-soldiers of slain Trooper Darryl Caswell down the tarmac at Kandahar Airfield as they escort his casket into a plane that'll bring him back to Canada today. Caswell, 25, died Monday.

BYLINE: CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 107

Memories of Trooper Darryl Caswell bring smiles to the faces of his fellow-soldiers in Afghanistan -- the lost promise of what could have been brings pain.

It was evident on the faces of eight of his fellow-soldiers early this morning in Afghanistan as they solemnly marched Caswell's casket past row upon row of coalition troops standing at attention at Kandahar Airfield.

They tightly gripped the coffin and each other as they made their way to the Hercules transport plane flying Caswell home to Canada.

For Cpl. Wade Wick, 25, it was the didgeridoo band the pair were going to start.

"Being in his crew over here was probably the best experience I ever had with a guy," said Wick, who was injured.

Caswell, 25, died Monday when an armoured vehicle he was in struck a roadside bomb about 40 km north of Kandahar. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Canadians brace for battles as foreigners bolster Taliban

IDNUMBER 200706140110
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 162

Chechen and Arab fighters have flooded into the latest hot spot for Taliban activity in southern Afghanistan, helping turn it into an insurgent "sanctuary," a senior Canadian army officer said yesterday.

Unknown numbers of foreign gunmen have infiltrated the Shahwali Kot district north of Kandahar City in recent weeks, said Lt.-Col. Rob Walker, who commands the Canadian battle group.

A soldier from Bracebridge, Ont., Trooper Darryl Caswell, was killed Monday while trying to bring supplies to Canadian and American forces battling those insurgents in the upper part of Shahwali Kot.

Yesterday, Canadian troops fought a two-hour battle with the Taliban in the Zhari district west of Kandahar City, the area where Canadian soldiers have seen the most action of late, said Walker. On the same day that Caswell's Coyote armoured car set off a mine, Canadians were also hit by improvised explosive devices in at least three other locations. There were no deaths in those attacks.

Canadians see through Afghan tragedy and farce

IDNUMBER 200706140097
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Comment
PAGE: A14
COLUMN: Susan Riley
BYLINE: Susan Riley
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 697

A recent poll reveals two things: That two-thirds of Canadians want our soldiers out of Afghanistan by the February 2009 deadline — and, by extension, that Canadians are not easily fooled.

They understand that however noble our ambitions for that battered country, however idealistic our soldiers (another of whom died this week) and diplomats, this is a war the West will never win.

The best we can hope for is a lull in hostilities lasting long enough to allow NATO to declare victory and get the heck out.

Despite military attempts to limit independent reporting and the difficulty of getting the story in a country where few outside reporters speak the language, a picture is emerging of what is really going on.

It is incomplete and complicated, but it doesn't much resemble the sunny accounts delivered in bland unison by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's ministers.

Not long ago, the PBS series Frontline sent veteran reporter Sam Kiley on an outing with Canadian troops stationed at Camp Martello, south of Kandahar. His report catalogued a comedy of errors, as well-meaning Canadian soldiers tried to secure spark plugs to get village wells running. This involved lumbering down dangerous roads in tanks, shooting at a civilian truck that came too close and injuring its passengers, failing to secure the necessary parts and, finally, abandoning the villagers to the mercies of the Taliban.

Kiley was filled with admiration for the soldiers; his report was not intended to ridicule their efforts, but to illustrate — as he did, brilliantly — the difficulty of winning hearts and minds from inside a tank. It is like trying to remove a sliver wearing mittens: Even the most skilled surgeon is doomed to fail.

Rather than rethinking military strategy, however, the Harper government marches on, down the same explosive-strewn path.

It talks more about reconstruction these days but, according to recent figures, of 36,000 foreign soldiers in Afghanistan, only 2,000 to 2,500 are engaged in rebuilding. Only a portion of international aid money has been spent, either because there is no security or because there is confusion over who will supervise proposed projects.

Yet all we hear from senior ministers is happy talk. Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay last week reported that "in the last few weeks, our provincial reconstruction team hosted an important human-rights workshop" attended by Afghan army, security and police officials.

What's next? Gourmet-cooking classes to help Afghan widows get back on their feet?

MacKay also reported that one of the "most touching" experiences of his recent visit to Afghanistan was watching Canadians distribute new uniforms to Afghan police. "The pride they felt in receiving those uniforms, which sported the Afghan flag, was nothing short of amazing. It was very reminiscent, I'm sure, of the feeling our own RCMP have on graduation."

Also reminiscent of a scene from Evelyn Waugh's novel *Scoop*, a timeless spoof of war reporting. (In a country where 50 per cent of men are unemployed, could it be the steady paycheque, not the uniforms, that inspired excitement?)

As for the fate of detainees handed over to Afghan authorities, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor explains that under an improved monitoring regime, every time a detainee is turned over, Afghan authorities get a copy of Canada's expectations regarding proper treatment, with a carbon copy going to the prisoner (who, as Public Security Minister Stockwell Day points out, "are suspected terrorists, people who know no limits when it comes to the suicide killing of others").

Despite the sinister nature of detainees, and Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge upon enemies," its prisons have moved "in very short time" from the revenge system to respect for human rights, Day claims.

As for how many detainees we have handed over, MacKay says he can't say because many Afghans have the same name and no street addresses, or birth certificates -- making it difficult to track individuals, "particularly those whose stated purpose is to avoid detection."

But, apart from not knowing where detainees are, and despite Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge," all is now well on that front.

"Rome was not built in a day," Secretary of State Helena Guergis chirpily reminded the Commons defence committee recently.

As to why her government didn't protest the ejection of human rights activist Malalai Joya from the Afghan parliament for comparing fellow members to zoo animals, Guergis replied: "It's their parliament."

Still, it sounds as if they could use another human-rights workshop.

Afghanistan conflict threatens military training courses; Manpower shortages may force cancellation of half this summer's schedule

IDNUMBER 200706140019
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A10
KEYWORDS: ARMED FORCES; WAR; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA; ALBERTA
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: Vancouver Sun
WORD COUNT: 351

OTTAWA — The Canadian Forces, squeezed by the Afghanistan conflict, may be forced to cancel half the training courses for regular and reserve soldiers scheduled for this summer in the West.

The training problem, caused by the unavailability of qualified officers to teach troops, could cause a shortage of reservists in 2009 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper decides to extend the mission past February of that year, said one reserve officer.

"We're still struggling to find trainers, there's no question about that," said Lt-Col. Tom Manley, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders reserve unit, which has generated a disproportionate number of volunteers for the Afghan mission.

"And there's a chance we simply may not get everyone trained that could potentially deploy."

Manley said the shortage is the result of so many experienced soldiers preparing for the next Afghan rotation headed by Western soldiers in the first half of 2008.

He spoke about the problem in February before the Senate national security committee.

Col. Art Wriedt, commanding officer of the Calgary-based 41 Canadian Brigade Group, told senators recruiting and training reservists for a possible 2009 mission is a "big worry."

The Defence Department website says only 18 of 40 summer courses, scheduled in Edmonton, Wainwright, Alta., Chilliwack, Winnipeg, and Shilo, Man., are expected to go ahead.

Of the rest, six are likely to be cancelled and 16 are flagged yellow, meaning they "may be cancelled."

Lt.-Col. Shane Bridgeman, a regular force officer at Land Forces Western Area in Edmonton, cautioned, however, that many if not all of those courses could go ahead.

Reservists — volunteer soldiers who take leaves from their jobs — have typically made up 12 per cent to 14 per cent of the 2,500-person contingent in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan conflict threatens military training courses; Manpower shortages may force cancellation of half t

But reserve units are expected to make up 20 per cent of the rotation in the first half of 2008, which will be led by a battalion from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment in Edmonton.

The Princess Patricias would also be the lead regiment in Afghanistan in the second half of 2009 if the mission is extended.

Bridgeman said the army has faced similar training challenges in the recent past, and said the comments from the reserve officers reflect the growing pressure on that increasingly important component of the military.

Defence officials, citing a recent commitment from Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, say the availability of trainers fluctuates but the military has always been able to meet its commitments.

poneil1@hotmail.com

Happy talk belies Afghan reality

IDNUMBER 200706140083
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Forum
PAGE: A8
COLUMN: Susan Riley
BYLINE: Susan Riley
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 699

A recent poll reveals two things: that two-thirds of Canadians want our soldiers out of Afghanistan by the February 2009 deadline and, by extension, that Canadians are not easily fooled.

They understand that however noble our ambitions for that battered country, however idealistic our soldiers (another of whom died Tuesday) and diplomats, this is a war the West will never win. The best we can hope for is a lull in hostilities that lasts long enough to allow NATO to declare victory and get the heck out.

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This involved lumbering down dangerous roads in tanks, shooting at and injuring passengers on a civilian truck that came too close, failing to secure the necessary parts and, finally, abandoning the villagers to the mercies of the Taliban.

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It talks more about reconstruction these days but, according to recent figures, of 36,000 foreign soldiers in Afghanistan, only 2,000 to 2,500 are engaged in rebuilding.

Only a portion of international aid money has been spent, either because there is no security or because there is confusion over who will supervise proposed projects.

Yet, all we hear from senior ministers is happy talk. Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay last week reported that "in the last few weeks, our provincial reconstruction team hosted an important human rights workshop" attended by Afghan army, security and police officials. What's next? Gourmet cooking classes to

help Afghan widows get back on their feet?

MacKay also reported that one of the "most touching" experiences of his recent visit to Afghanistan was watching Canadians distribute new uniforms to Afghan police.

"The pride they felt in receiving those uniforms, which sported the Afghan flag, was nothing short of amazing. It was very reminiscent, I'm sure, of the feeling our own RCMP have on graduation," he offered.

It also was reminiscent of a scene from Evelyn Waugh's novel *Scoop*, a timeless spoof of war reporting. In a country where 50 per cent of men are unemployed, could it be the steady paycheque, not the uniforms, that inspired excitement?

As for the fate of detainees handed over to Afghan authorities, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor explains that under an improved monitoring regime, every time a detainee is turned over, Afghan authorities get a copy of Canada's expectations regarding proper treatment.

A carbon copy goes to the prisoners who, as Public Security Minister Stockwell Day points out, "are suspected terrorists, people who know no limits when it comes to the suicide killing of others."

Despite the sinister nature of detainees and Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge upon enemies," its prisons have moved "in very short time" from the revenge system to respect for human rights, Day claims.

As for just how many detainees we have handed over, MacKay says he provide that information because many Afghans have the same name and no street addresses or birth certificates, making it difficult to track individuals, "particularly those whose stated purpose is to avoid detection."

But, apart from not knowing where detainees are and despite Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge," all is now well on that front, we are told.

"Rome was not built in a day," Secretary of State Helena Guergis chirpily reminded the Commons' defence committee recently. As to why her government didn't protest the ejection of human rights activist Malalai Joya from the Afghan parliament for comparing fellow members to zoo animals, she replied: "It's their Parliament."

Still, it sounds as if they could use another human rights workshop.

Canadians need to focus on rebuilding Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200706140078
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Forum
PAGE: A9
BYLINE: Leo Kurtenbach
SOURCE: The StarPhoenix
WORD COUNT: 282

Each time we hear of a Canadian soldier "killed in action," those of us safe at home cannot help but think how we'd feel if that person was one of our children.

We hardly ever hear about our soldiers who have been severely injured , physically incapacitated or mentally affected because it's not normal to seek out to kill those who we, as Canadians, have deemed to be the enemy.

To those who believe that war is abhorrent and wonder about Canada's presence in Afghanistan, our government says that we are not supporting our troops. We are accused of wanting to "cut and run."

My response is that we should "cut" the killing and "run" with reconstruction and social programs for the Afghan people, who've been subjected to years of foreign control through armed intervention.

After a long struggle they were able to unchain themselves from their British colonizers. More recently, they waged 12 years of war against an invading Russian army of 100,000 troops. This was followed by the American invasion to find Osama bin Laden, who was a shareholder in the Carlyle corporation along with the Bush family. Bin Laden isn't even an Afghan citizen.

Every war has to have the "good guys" and the "bad guys." In Afghanistan, the Taliban are the "bad guys." We hear occasionally that our brave soldiers have killed a number of Taliban fighters, with civilians who get in the way unfortunately being killed sometimes.

I wonder when a Taliban fighter is killed, whether his family says, "We're so happy he got killed. Now we women may not have to wear that ridiculous veil over our faces and maybe our boys and girls can go to the same school."

War is hell.

Leo Kurtenbach

Cudworth

Possible reserve soldier shortage looms; Canadian Forces brass mulls session cancellations as it struggles to find trainers

IDNUMBER 200706140037
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: National
PAGE: B7
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 512

OTTAWA -- The Canadian Forces, squeezed by the Afghanistan conflict, may be forced to cancel half the training courses for regular and reserve soldiers scheduled for this summer in Western Canada.

The training squeeze, caused by the unavailability of qualified officers to teach troops, could cause a shortage of reservists in 2009 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper decides to extend the mission past February of that year, according to one reserve officer.

"We're still struggling to find trainers, there's no question about that," said Lt.-Col. Tom Manley, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders reserve unit, which has generated a disproportionate number of volunteers for the Afghanistan mission.

"And there's a chance we simply may not get everyone trained that could potentially deploy, so we may have to leave some behind (in 2009) because they didn't get the training they needed," he said this week.

Manley said the trainer shortage is the result of so many experienced soldiers -- who would normally lead training sessions -- preparing for the next Afghanistan rotation headed by western Canadian soldiers in the first half of 2008.

Manley spoke about the shortage of trainers at an appearance in Calgary in February before the Senate national security committee.

Col. Art Wriedt, commanding officer of the Calgary-based 41 Canadian Brigade Group, told senators that recruiting and training reservists for a possible 2009 mission is a "big worry."

The national defence department's website says only 18 of 40 summer courses, scheduled in Alberta, B.C. and Manitoba, are expected to go ahead.

Of the rest, six are likely to be cancelled and 16 are flagged yellow as courses that "may be cancelled."

But Lt.-Col. Shane Bridgeman, a regular force officer at Land Forces Western Area in Edmonton, cautioned that many, if not all, of those courses could go ahead.

Reservists — volunteer soldiers who take leaves from their jobs — have typically made up 12 to 14 per cent of the 2,500-person contingent in Afghanistan.

But reserve units are under increased pressure to find recruits and are expected to make up 20 per cent of the rotation in the first half of 2008, which will be led by a battalion from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment in Edmonton. The Princess Pats would also be the lead regiment in Afghanistan in the second half of 2009 if the mission is extended.

Bridgeman said the army has faced similar training challenges in the recent past, and said the comments from the reserve officers reflect the growing pressure on that increasingly important component of the Canadian military.

"The system is routinely under stress," he said.

"We're quite used to managing the priorities. This is probably the first time that individual (reserve) units have seen that strain to this extent, because they're generating more people for overseas than they ever have before. Suddenly it's all apparent to them."

Defence department officials, citing a recent commitment from army commander Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, say the availability of trainers fluctuates, but the military has always been able to meet its commitments.

"Gen. Leslie has said that 'Yes, the army is stretched, but that we are able to maintain our commitments out to February of '09,' " said spokesperson Maj. Daryl Morrell.

"It's premature for us to go out and speculate on any kind of mandate, past what the government has given us."

Morrell said soldiers training for 2009 overseas missions are preparing for any assignment given to them by the government.

(VANCOUVER SUN)

Foreign fighters reinforce resistance: military

IDNUMBER 200706140006
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: C9
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 498

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Chechen and Arab fighters have flooded into the latest hot spot for Taliban activity in southern Afghanistan, helping turn it into an insurgent "sanctuary," a senior Canadian army officer said Wednesday.

Unknown numbers of foreign militants have infiltrated the Shahwali Kot district north of Kandahar City in recent weeks, said Lt.-Col. Rob Walker, who commands the Canadian battle group.

A soldier from Bracebridge, Ont., Trooper Darryl Caswell, was killed Monday while trying to bring supplies to Canadian and American forces battling those fighters in the upper part of Shahwali Kot.

"The insurgents decided they are going to mass within that area, and there are a lot of foreign fighters there — Chechens and Arabs," said Walker. "It's a bit of a sanctuary, so ISAF (the International Security Assistance Force) has decided we need to go up there to confront them, so that's where the fighting is."

Soldiers of the U.S. 82nd Airborne and American special forces have already been combating insurgents in the district. They have been aided by Canadian artillery units, whose M-777s are the most advanced big guns in the Afghan theatre, capable of hurling shells up to 30 kilometres.

The NATO troops are having an effect on the imported fighters, said Walker, adding that reports suggest the gunmen "are taking some pretty good losses over the last couple of weeks since they've been there."

Reports of Arabs and other foreign combatants in Afghanistan always strike an ominous note, suggesting there is broader support for the insurgency, at least outside the country. It is not the first time, moreover, that NATO has reported such sightings.

The Canadian army maintained that it faced off against Arab militants during fierce combat in the Panjwai district west of Kandahar last year. And al-Qaida has released videos it claims shows Arabs battling alongside local insurgents in Afghanistan.

Walker could not say exactly how many of the foreign gunmen may have gathered in Shahwali Kot. Canada had a presence in the area last spring and summer but then pulled out.

Since then, insurgents have filled the vacuum. On Wednesday, for instance, Canadian troops fought a two-hour battle with the Taliban in the Zhari district west of Kandahar City, the area where Canadian soldiers have seen the most action of late, said Walker. On the same day that Caswell's Coyote armoured car set off a mine, Canadians were also hit by improvised explosive devices in at least three other locations. There were no

deaths in those attacks.

While there has been an upsurge in such "asymmetric" tactics by insurgents lately, there are also signs that ordinary Afghans are siding against the Taliban, said Walker.

He related the story of a group of village elders who openly urged Taliban fighters to stay away from their community.

"They could see Taliban in the area . . . and they read verses of the Koran and asked them to leave, because they didn't want fighting in the area," the officer said.

In the same enclave, other villagers refused to let Taliban into their compound, insisting they sleep in a grape-drying hut instead, and indicating they did not have enough food to feed the militants, Walker added.

Caption Only

IDNUMBER 200706140002
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: C10

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Reuters / Around the world in photos: SATURDAYNIGHT WINE: Canadian-born actor and musician Dan Aykroyd drinks wine Wednesday as he launches the Dan Aykroyd Winery in Toronto. ; Colour Photo: Reuters / BOAT HOPPING: A boy plays on boats tied on the banks of river Ganges Wednesday in Varanasi, India. ; Colour Photo: Reuters / LANDING PAD: A dragonfly rests on a plant Wednesday on the outskirts of Agartala, India. ; Colour Photo: Reuters / WATER DAMAGE: People wade through a flooded street Wednesday in Liuzhou, China. ; Photo: Reuters / ALWAYS ALERT: A member of the National Anticrime Force takes position during an operation against drug gangs Wednesday in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. ; Photo: Getty Images / NEW MOURNING: A relative of landslide victims cries Wednesday in Chittagong, Bangladesh. ; Colour Photo: Reuters / DONKEY EXPRESS: Afghan boys ride on donkey carts carrying drinking water Wednesday in Kabul, Afghanistan. ; Colour Photo: Reuters / BALLOON COCOON: A Canadian artist works on his six-metre-tall pyramid Tuesday for the annual Kids Fest in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. ;

SOURCE: The StarPheonix
WORD COUNT: 4

NO TEXT

Reserve soldier shortage looms, warns brass; Lack of trainers holds Canadian Forces at bay

IDNUMBER 200706140148
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
KEYWORDS: ARMED FORCES; WAR; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA; ALBERTA
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: Vancouver Sun; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 474

OTTAWA – The Canadian Forces, squeezed by the Afghanistan conflict, may be forced to cancel half the training courses for regular and reserve soldiers scheduled for this summer in Western Canada.

The training squeeze, caused by the unavailability of qualified officers to teach troops, could cause a shortage of reservists in 2009 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper decides to extend the mission past February of that year, according to one reserve officer.

"We're still struggling to find trainers, there's no question about that," said Lt.-Col. Tom Manley, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders reserve unit, which has generated a disproportionate number of volunteers for the Afghanistan mission.

"And there's a chance we simply may not get everyone trained that could potentially deploy, so we may have to leave some behind (in 2009) because they didn't get the training they needed," he said this week.

Manley said the trainer shortage is the result of so many experienced soldiers — who would normally lead training sessions — preparing for the next Afghanistan rotation headed by western Canadian soldiers in the first half of 2008.

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Col. Art Wriedt, commanding officer of the Calgary-based 41 Canadian Brigade Group, told senators that recruiting and training reservists for a possible 2009 mission is a "big worry."

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But reserve units are under increased pressure to find recruits and are expected to make up 20 per cent of the rotation in the first half of 2008, which will be led by a battalion from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment in Edmonton. The Princess Pats would also be the lead regiment in Afghanistan in the second half of 2009 if the mission is extended.

Defence department officials, citing a recent commitment from army commander Lt.–Gen. Andrew Leslie, say the availability of trainers fluctuates, but the military has always been able to meet its commitments.

"General Leslie has said that 'yes, the army is stretched, but that we are able to maintain our commitments out to February of '09,' " said spokesman Maj. Daryl Morrell.

"It's premature for us to go out and speculate on any kind of mandate, past what the government has given us."

Morrell said soldiers training for 2009 overseas missions are preparing for any assignment given to them by the government.

New Democratic Party defence critic Dawn Black learned of the trainer shortage after receiving a call from a concerned reservist in B.C.

"It just shows totally how overstretched our Canadian Forces are in terms of this mission in Afghanistan," said the MP for New Westminster–Coquitlam.

Troopers accept risks as another comrade dies; Danger greatest for junior members in lead vehicles

IDNUMBER: 200706140132
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: National Post; CanWest News Service / Trooper Darryl Caswell of the Royal Canadian Dragoons was travelling in this Coyote armoured vehicle when it hit a powerful mine about 40 kilometres north of Kandahar, Afghanistan on Monday. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: National Post; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 328

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Trooper Darryl Caswell and Cpl. Wade Wick, crew members in the same Coyote armoured vehicle, had made a vow. The two friends would each buy tattoos to commemorate buddies from their unit of the Royal Canadian Dragoons who were killed in an explosion in April.

Wick said Wednesday he is more determined than ever to get the memorial tattoo when he returns to Canada in August.

Now, though, he will have to add another name: that of Caswell, killed Monday when the Coyote hit a mine.

For members of the Dragoons reconnaissance squadron, whose job often involves pushing into uncharted territory, such tragedies are becoming a fact of life in Afghanistan. Caswell's crew could not ignore the reality, since their junior status meant they were almost always the lead vehicles in convoys, and most likely to trigger a mine or be targeted by some other bomb.

In March, they were hit with an improvised explosive device that shook them up but did not hurt anyone badly. Later, they were in an ambush.

"We all knew the risks ... Us being the first to be hit by everything was a well-known, accepted risk. We'd wake up every day, look at each other and we'd be thankful we still had another day and we'd start afresh days," said Wick.

Caswell was killed as his Coyote led a supply convoy along a remote and bumpy road up to a base used by U.S. infantry and Canadian artillery units north of Kandahar City.

He was the 57th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan since 2002. Wick and another member were injured.

Wick and Trooper Steve Davidson, the fallen soldier's best friend, lauded their buddy Wednesday as someone who would think of others first and be quick to lift spirits with his wit and good humour.

"He's just been an incredible friend ... I can safely say he made me the man I am today," said Davidson, another member of the Recce squadron, as it is known colloquially. "I don't know what I'll do without him."

Troopers accept risks as another comrade dies; Danger greatest for junior members in lead vehicles 69

Caswell's nickname was Ricky Bobby, the main character in the movie Talladega Nights, a comedy about race car drivers. "He always wanted to go fast," Wick said.

Afghanistan's future looks bleak, despite the best efforts of Canada; Behind the Harper team's happy talk lies a tale of farce and failure

IDNUMBER 200706140124
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A16
COLUMN: Susan Riley
KEYWORDS: PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Susan Riley
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 693

OTTAWA – A recent poll reveals two things: that two-thirds of Canadians want our soldiers out of Afghanistan by the February, 2009 deadline — and, by extension, that Canadians are not easily fooled.

They understand that however noble our ambitions for that battered country, however idealistic our soldiers and diplomats, this is a war the West will never win. The best we can hope for is a lull in hostilities lasting long enough to allow NATO to declare victory and get the heck out.

Despite military attempts to limit independent reporting, and the difficulty of getting the story in a country where few outside reporters speak the language, a picture is emerging of what is really going on. It is incomplete and complicated, but it doesn't much resemble the sunny accounts delivered in bland unison by Stephen Harper's ministers.

Not long ago, PBS Frontline sent veteran reporter Sam Kiley on an outing with Canadian troops stationed at Camp Martello, south of Kandahar.

His report catalogued a comedy of errors, as well-meaning Canadian soldiers tried to secure spark plugs to get village wells running.

This involved lumbering down dangerous roads in tanks, shooting at a civilian truck that came too close and injuring its passengers, failing to secure the necessary parts and, finally, abandoning the villagers to the mercies of the Taliban.

Kiley was filled with admiration for the soldiers; his report was not intended to ridicule their efforts, but to illustrate — as he did, brilliantly — the difficulty of winning hearts and minds from inside a tank.

It is like trying to remove a sliver wearing down mittens: even the most skilled surgeon is doomed to fail.

Rather than rethinking military strategy, however, the Harper government marches on, down the same explosive-strewn path. It talks more about reconstruction these days but, according to recent figures, of

Afghanistan's future looks bleak, despite the best efforts of Canada; Behind the Harper team's happy talk lies

36,000 foreign soldiers in Afghanistan, only 2,000 to 2,500 are engaged in rebuilding. Only a portion of international aid money has been spent, either because there is no security or because there is confusion over who will supervise proposed projects.

Yet all we hear from senior ministers is happy talk. Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay last week reported that "in the last few weeks, our provincial reconstruction team hosted an important human rights workshop" attended by Afghan army, security and police officials.

What's next? Gourmet cooking classes to help Afghan widows get back on their feet?

MacKay also reported that one of the "most touching" experiences of his recent visit to Afghanistan was watching Canadians distribute new uniforms to Afghan police.

"The pride they felt in receiving those uniforms, which sported the Afghan flag, was nothing short of amazing. It was very reminiscent, I'm sure, of the feeling our own RCMP have on graduation." Also reminiscent of a scene from Evelyn Waugh's novel *Scoop*, a timeless spoof of war reporting. (In a country where 50 per cent of men are unemployed, could it be the steady paycheque, not the uniforms, that inspired excitement?)

As for the fate of detainees handed over to Afghan authorities, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor explains that under an improved monitoring regime, every time a detainee is turned over, Afghan authorities get a copy of Canada's expectations regarding proper treatment, with a carbon copy going to the prisoner (who, as Public Security Minister Stockwell Day points out, "are suspected terrorists, people who know no limits when it comes to the suicide killing of others.")

Despite the sinister nature of detainees, and Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge upon enemies," its prisons have moved "in very short time" from the revenge system to respect for human rights, Day claims.

As for how many detainees we have handed over, MacKay says he can't say because many Afghans have the same name and no street addresses, or birth certificates — making it difficult to track individuals, "particularly those whose stated purpose is to avoid detection."

But, apart from not knowing where detainees are, and despite Afghanistan's history of "brutal revenge," all is now well on that front.

"Rome was not built in a day," Secretary of State Helena Guergis chirpily reminded the Commons defence committee recently.

As to why her government didn't protest the ejection of human rights activist Malalai Joya from the Afghan parliament for comparing fellow members to zoo animals, Guergis replied: "It's their Parliament."

Still, it sounds as if they could use another human rights workshop.

Susan Riley writes for the *Ottawa Citizen*

Even peacekeepers face combat

IDNUMBER 200706140122

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.06.14

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Letters

PAGE: A17

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Graham Thomson, The Journal, file / A Canadiansoldier checks out the view of Kandahar City through his rifle scope. ;

BYLINE: Elizabeth Massiah

SOURCE: The Edmonton Journal

WORD COUNT: 292

Re: "C Company's showdown at Seyyeden: Part I: The soldiers of C Company, 1 PPCLI had trained long and hard for combat, but one question lingered: would their courage wilt in the blistering desert heat under Taliban fire? On June 12, 2006, they found out," Sunday Reader, June 10.

This article on the details of the battle fought by members of C Company of the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Afghanistan is much appreciated.

It provides a close look at the issues of soldiering and combat. Interestingly, U.S. army Lt.-Col. Dave Grossman, an expert in battle stress who was brought in to teach soldiers how to be better killers, is now also working and writing against violence in an effort to end combat. He has written well on how hard it is to get soldiers to kill, and how devastating the impact of having to do that is on the soldier.

Unfortunately, the article repeats the erroneous belief that our soldiers have not been in combat since Korea. Where this notion comes from is unclear, but it is patently untrue.

Our troops face combat regularly on so called "peacekeeping" missions, yet their courage, determination and risk is not honoured. Carol Off wrote *The Ghosts of Medak* to help correct that ongoing piece of disrespect and ignorance. When she was governor general, Adrienne Clarkson presented those who had served in Medak in Croatia in 1993 with long-overdue medals.

In my work, I have the enormous privilege of being with current and veteran soldiers as they heal from the emotional and physical wounds of soldiering. Whenever there are articles such as this, the hurt of invisibility and lack of recognition is reinforced.

Our soldiers suffer on our behalf, and we owe them more than words can ever convey.

Elizabeth Massiah, Edmonton

Questioning O'Connor

IDNUMBER 200706140112
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A17
BYLINE: Patricia Hartnagel
SOURCE: The Edmonton Journal
WORD COUNT: 258

Re:"PM's defence of minister 'stupid': Opposition leaders blast Harper's 'irrational' argument aimed at military critics," The Journal, June 1.

The decision by a government to go to war is probably the most important decision it makes. The costs of war — the loss of life, and the destruction of infrastructure and the environment — are grave.

And the intangible costs of waging war?

What does that decision say to the global community about our values as a nation? Because of its magnitude, and because it is being done in our name, it is a decision that must be subjected to ongoing, intense scrutiny.

It is not only the right of every Canadian to question the mission in Afghanistan, it is our responsibility as engaged citizens.

An examination of the competence of Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor is a key component of any evaluation of our role in Afghanistan.

Given O'Connor's extraordinary mis-steps in recent weeks, it is all the more disingenuous of Prime Minister Stephen Harper to limit any critique of O'Connor's performance to those who have served in the military —though it is much more clever than the tired response that questioners don't "support our troops."

We have a defence minister who does not grasp what is happening at home (funeral—expense reimbursement for fallen soldiers) or in Afghanistan (Afghan detainee issue). To compound the situation, we have a prime minister who is unwilling to admit that he made a mistake in naming O'Connor to this portfolio.

What will be the long-term consequences of Harper's intransigence on this matter?

Harper needs to be reminded of a Turkish proverb. It rings true on a number of different levels, from the plight of

O'Connor to the Afghanistan mission itself: "No matter how far you have gone on the wrong road, turn back."

Patricia Hartnagel, Edmonton

Selling the mission

IDNUMBER 200706140111
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A17
BYLINE: Barrie Haigh
SOURCE: The Edmonton Journal
WORD COUNT: 348

Re: "Harper using every trick in the book to sell Afghan mission: He sincerely believes in this very bad war, but has no time for a debate," by Susan Riley, Opinion, May 25.

It is time for certain journalists and politicians to observe the message of the yellow ribbon that we see on a daily basis on vehicles, lamp posts, and trees.

The yellow ribbon symbolizes the contribution of our Forces and is an expression of our gratitude.

Since the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the Canadian Armed Forces have repeatedly, and in many parts of the world, earned the admiration of their allies and the respect of their enemies. These values are the currency of hard-fought battlefield victories and successful peace-keeping missions and are the product of hard training, personal perseverance, and selfless courage.

We, as Canadians, need to support these values and the men and women who have earned them, and continue to earn them on our behalf.

The rank and file troops and their leaders now engaged in the distasteful, but rewarding task of bringing peace and civility to Afghanistan believe in what they are doing, have volunteered to do it, and know what is needed to get it done.

They see, on a daily basis, the effect of their labours and know that what they are accomplishing comes at a high cost, but has an even higher value.

They are in the midst of the violence and horror and accordingly, have more credibility than the naysayers who are safe at home with little to offer other than an opinion.

To leave the conflict at a time when great progress is being made would be a terrible insult to the soldiers now engaged and to the memory of those whose lives have been lost.

We cannot begin to understand what these soldiers experience in this very important mission but we must, at the very least, offer our moral and material support so that they may see it through to completion.

We must also support the heroes behind the heroes -- the spouses and families who wait anxiously for the dreaded phone call or the staff car in the driveway. They believe in the work that their spouses are doing and the mission that they are accomplishing, and support them in every way possible.

This the message of the yellow ribbon.

THE AFGHAN MISSION Insurgents massing in volatile district Hard-core fighters have infiltrated the region where Trooper Caswell died, official says

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL
IDN: 071650241
DATE: 2007.06.14
PAGE: A8 (ILLUS)
BYLINE: GRAEME SMITH
SECTION: National News
EDITION: Metro
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
WORDS: 596
WORD COUNT: 568

GRAEME SMITH KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN The district where a Canadian soldier died this week has been infiltrated by Arab and Chechen fighters who form the notorious hard core of the insurgency, a senior military official says.

The roadside bombing that killed Trooper Darryl Caswell on Monday was part of a struggle for control of the volatile Shah Wali Kot district, said Lieutenant-Colonel Rob Walker, the battle group commander, describing the area as a sanctuary for foreign militants.

Pressure from NATO forces has so far prevented the Taliban from forming into large attack groups of the kind witnessed last year, Lt.-Col. Walker said, but the insurgents have been concentrating themselves in Shah Wali Kot, a vast district north of Kandahar city where the dry flatlands rise into the foothills of the Hindu Kush.

"The insurgents basically decided they're going to mass within that area," Lt.-Col. Walker said. "There's a lot of foreign fighters, Chechens and Arabs that have decided to move into that area." The Afghan government has been urging NATO's International Security Assistance Force to focus its attacks on the most radical elements of the Taliban, fearing that peace cannot be achieved by killing the insurgent's foot soldiers.

"ISAF has decided they need to go up there and confront them," Lt.-Col. Walker said. "That's where the fighting is, with the Afghan National Army and the ISAF soldiers, up into the northern portion of Shah Wali Kot. . . . I suspect that operation will go on for quite some time." Trooper Caswell had played a supporting role in the operation, ferrying supplies to combat troops in a large road convoy, but officials say the likelihood of ambushes and bombings makes those trips very dangerous.

Even in such harsh circumstances, however, friends remembered him bearing the risks with good humour.

The first time he felt a roadside bomb thud against the armour plating of his Coyote reconnaissance vehicle was March 24, when his vehicle was hit during a patrol in Panjwai District. Spurred on by Trooper Caswell's irrepressible sense of humour, the bombing became a running joke among the soldiers for several days.

"I don't think we've all laughed so hard in my life," said Corporal Wade Wick, 25, of Vernon, B.C.

Another bombing, on April 11, showed that Trooper Caswell also understood when to stop making jokes. An improvised explosive device detonated near their armoured vehicle on a dirt track in Zhari District.

THE AFGHAN MISSION Insurgents massing in volatile district Hard-core fighters have infiltrated the region

A vehicle from the same Royal Canadian Dragoons reconnaissance squadron went to rescue them, but was itself caught in another explosion.

The second bombing was deadly, killing Master Corporal Allan Stewart, 30, and Trooper Patrick Pentland, 23.

In the aftermath of that double attack, Trooper Steve Davidson, 20, of Winnipeg, found himself leaning on Trooper Caswell for support.

"It was really nice to have Cas around for that [fatal bombing]," Trooper Davidson said. "It was great to have somebody I could turn to, to support me, who understood exactly what I was going through, all the emotions. He was never too manly to give a hug." His regular nickname, Cas, was sometimes replaced with the handle Ricky Bobby, the name of a racecar driver from the movie Talladega Nights, because of his penchant for driving quickly in his armoured vehicle. Trooper Caswell and Cpl. Wick agreed to get commemorative tattoos to remember each of their comrades killed in Afghanistan.

They never had time to design the tattoos, and now his friends will do it without him.

"We're not going to let them be forgotten," Cpl. Wick said.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; defence; deaths

PERSONAL NAME: Darryl Caswell

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Taliban

THE AFGHAN MISSION 'Dramatic' Taliban resurgence detailed

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071650240

DATE: 2007.06.14

PAGE: A1

BYLINE: ALAN FREEMAN

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 791

WORD COUNT: 898

ALAN FREEMAN OTTAWA An analysis of the situation in Afghanistan last fall prepared for top levels of the Canadian government warned that the country was becoming "two Afghanistans" with the situation in the fractious South and West continuing to deteriorate and the position of President Hamid Karzai "weakening to a new low." This grim assessment of Afghan reality was prepared last November by the International Assessment Staff of the Privy Council Office, which effectively acts as Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government department.

A series of heavily censored documents prepared by the PCO were obtained by The Globe and Mail after Access to Information requests by information expert Jeff Esau.

The briefing notes, with the author's name, were apparently intended for Gregory Fyffe, executive director of the 60-strong assessment unit, and were prepared after Canadian NATO troops based in Kandahar in the volatile southern region had suffered several bloody months of combat.

"The Taliban resurgence has been dramatic," stated a document dated Nov. 9, 2006.

It describes how the faltering insurgency was given a huge boost by support from sources in Pakistan, the Gulf states and "Jihadi-minded groups and individuals." "The unpredicted success that suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) had in southern Afghanistan last winter further reinforced the spiralling growth of financial assistance, recruitment, training, equipping and morale improvement" of the Taliban, it said, noting that insurgent spirits were particularly raised with the high-profile shooting down of several helicopters.

The paper was slightly more upbeat when it came to analyzing the threat that the insurgency could spread throughout the country, noting that the Taliban lacked popular support in regions outside the South. But it did consider the consequences if NATO failed in its mission, mulling the possibility that the Taliban could "prevail in the South because of a successful propaganda effort that politically forces NATO out of that area." Because of expanding poppy cultivation and the growing insurgency, the analysis noted, the deterioration of security had effectively created "two Afghanistans" with the North and West advancing while the South and East remain "fractious and relatively stagnant." As for Mr. Karzai, the PCO analysis noted that his leadership is "continuously challenged and eroded by the many problems facing Afghanistan and the complex relationships over which he has no control.

Consequently, Karzai's support may be weakening to a new low." It adds that Mr. Karzai faces "questions of

legitimacy for his governance team – both in Kabul and out in the provinces." The blunt analysis of the situation is in stark contrast with other Afghan–related documents released at the same time by the PCO and which consist of upbeat "messages and storylines" about how well things were going in Afghanistan and how there were "signs of progress, unthinkable only a few years ago." These messages are clearly aimed at bolstering shaky public support for the mission.

"By supporting the rebuilding of institutions such as independent courts, police and the army, Canada is on the ground laying the foundation for Afghans to govern themselves and secure a better future," one of the documents said.

In contrast, the more candid PCO assessment notes only "mixed success" in reforming the Afghan justice system and addressing "a culture of immunity among major warlords, criminals, drug lords and political figures." And it calls Afghan security forces "weak and undeveloped." TWO TAKES On reconstruction 'We are making significant progress in Afghanistan. Canadian, Afghan and international reconstruction efforts have yielded positive results.' Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, Nov. 10, 2006 'The lack of tangible reconstruction in the South (but not in the North) only served to prove the point that the writ of the .

. . government in Kabul was weak . . . in Pashtun areas.' International Assessment Staff report, Nov. 9, 2006 On Afghan institutions 'In the five years since the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghans have taken control of their destiny. They have done so by voting for it in peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections; by establishing institutions to provide services to Afghans . . .' Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in op–ed article signed with Dutch PM Jan Peter Balkenende, Nov. 28, 2006 'The five major elements of Security Sector Reform have had mixed success. Justice Sector Reform has been slow in making a difference that could demonstrate progress in addressing a culture of immunity among major warlords, criminals, drug lords and political figures.' International Assessment Staff report, Nov. 9, 2006 On illegal activity 'We will continue to vigorously support Afghan efforts to strengthen the rule of law, tackle corruption and take action against illegal narcotics.' Mr. Harper and Mr. Balkenende, Nov. 28, 2006 'The expanding opium cultivation crisis is pervasive and increasingly linked to the rebounding insurgency, especially in southern Afghanistan.' International Assessment Staff report, Nov. 9, 2006

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: strife; defence; policy

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Taliban

THE AFGHAN MISSION: MILITARY AIRCRAFT Troops still waiting on helicopters

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071650204

DATE: 2007.06.14

PAGE: A8

BYLINE: DANIEL LEBLANC AND GRAEME SMITH

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: OTTAWA, KANDAHAR

WORDS: 325

WORD COUNT: 328

DANIEL LEBLANC AND GRAEME SMITH OTTAWA, KANDAHAR No relief is in sight for Canadian troops in Afghanistan who are hankering for more helicopters to fly them over the country's deadly roads.

As it stands, soldiers in Afghanistan rely on U.S. and Dutch helicopters to travel to forward operating bases, but officials acknowledged yesterday that there is a "high demand and a limited supply" of coalition aircraft in the country.

The next possible option for Canadian troops would have been the delivery of 28 Sikorsky maritime patrol helicopters. Federal documents show that in late 2005, the federal government changed its contract with Sikorsky to ensure that the new Cyclones – replacements for the aging Sea Kings – could be transformed into troop carriers with 22 seats.

However, a Sikorsky official said yesterday that the fleet of Cyclones will not be suited to transport troops in hot and high-altitude regions such as Afghanistan, where dozens of Canadian soldiers have died on the roads.

"If you really want to employ it in that environment predominantly, you probably want to look at giving it more capability," said Lloyd Noseworthy of Sikorsky.

"You could upgrade the engine, more powerful engines, and you could upgrade the rotor system, through a more lift-capable rotor system." In addition to the Cyclones, the Canadian government is buying transport Chinook helicopters, but they are not scheduled to be delivered for duty in Afghanistan until 2011 or 2012.

This week, Trooper Darryl Caswell died when his Coyote vehicle hit a roadside bomb on a dangerous road.

Lieutenant-Colonel Rob Walker, the battle group commander in Kandahar, said transport helicopters are urgently needed to support Canada's forward operating bases.

"If you're on a combat logistics patrol out of this base, having to resupply all my FOBs, those gentlemen, those soldiers in that vehicle, every night they know they can be targeted by an ambush or an [improvised explosive device]. . . . Every time you drive down these roads, there's a risk."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; equipment; helicopters

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

On Iraq, Liberals squander a golden opportunity

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071650185

DATE: 2007.06.14

PAGE: A19

BYLINE: LAWRENCE MARTIN

SECTION: Comment Column

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 720

WORD COUNT: 698

LAWRENCE MARTIN Who in this country is going to have the courage to lead the charge on the escalating tragedy in Iraq? Who is going to side with the majority of the American people who have turned against the war? Not the Liberal Party. Under its new leadership, it has been strangely mute on the subject, squandering a major strategic political advantage.

"It's not our war," says party foreign affairs critic Ujjal Dosanjh.

It may not be our war, but its impact is significant – and more damaging than the Vietnam conflict, which prompted other Liberal leaders to speak out.

Iraq makes the war in Afghanistan less winnable because the U.S.

is fighting on two fronts. Iraq, according to U.S. intelligence agencies, is increasing, not decreasing, the chances of terrorism worldwide, Canada included. Vietnam had no such echoes.

Iraq is one issue where the Liberals have their opponents at their mercy. The Grits, of course, opposed the invasion; the Stephen Harper Conservatives, in the main, backed it. On the other war, Afghanistan, the Prime Minister is a hard-liner; Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, like the majority of Canadians, doesn't want an open-ended commitment.

The two conflicts, as British Prime Minister Tony Blair pointed out this week, are linked, and there is little likelihood that conditions on either front will improve over the next year.

For Mr. Dion, who has a vague public image, it creates a marvellous opportunity to set himself and his vision boldly apart from that of Mr. Harper: man of peace versus man of war. While supporting the badly needed modernization of the Canadian military, he could cast himself as the protector of the great Canadian peace-making tradition.

So what's holding him back? The Conservatives dig into his past to undercut him on global warming. But he won't make Mr. Harper eat his past words on Iraq? Some Liberals suspect the muzzling is due to the influence of Michael Ignatieff. He supported the Iraq invasion and he is deputy leader of the party. But Mr. Dosanjh denied any such sensitivity, saying the party, not an individual member, decides.

Mr. Dosanjh strongly opposes the militarization of Canadian foreign policy under Mr. Harper, a trend convincingly set out in a new book, *Intent for a Nation*, by Michael Byers. "It's absolutely wrong what Mr. Harper is doing," says Mr. Dosanjh. "It sends the wrong message about Canada." But while his head may be

there, his vocal chords haven't been.

Because Iraq isn't our war, Mr. Dosanjh said, "we don't necessarily comment on it." He sounded like he had never heard of the expression, "Nice guys finish last." There is some suspicion that Mr. Dion is afraid of stirring domestic right-wing critics with any criticism of White House warring. But, as a matter of principle, how can he stay silent? He should be siding with the war's more vocal Democratic Party naysayers in the U.S., and with the American people themselves.

Raising the issue isn't going to change any minds in the Bush circle. But Canada was one of the leaders in opposing the war and gained respect around the world for doing so. Because of the ensuing silence, that respect has diminished.

The Liberals are not oblivious to Bush-Harper linkages. Last week, they sent out Dominic LeBlanc, one of their bright young MPs, to make the point. He traced the Conservative slogan "a stronger, safer, better Canada" to a Bush speech. He traced Mr. Harper's labelling of Mr. Dion as "not a leader" to how George Bush attacked his 2004 opponent, John Kerry. He noted how the Conservatives also share the same taste in interior design as the Bushies. "Look through the window of this PMO and you'll see a Bush-Cheney campaign poster." Though Mr. Harper wisely distanced himself on global warming from Mr. Bush at last week's G8 summit, Mr. LeBlanc highlighted many past comparisons on that file as well.

But the biggest, most politically damaging link between Canadian and American leaders is the Iraq bloodbath. The Liberals have Mr.

Harper cornered and won't take advantage.

That may change. As Mr. Dosanjh thought about it, he said: "I agree that we should articulate it more."
lmartin@globeandmail.com

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Iraq

SUBJECT TERM: strife; foreign policy; foreign relations; defence; terrorism; government; political

PERSONAL NAME: Ujjal Dosanjh; Stephen Harper; Stephane Dion; Michael Ignatieff

ORGANIZATION NAME: Liberal Party

Dion failing to ignite Liberal fires; So closely associated with the old guard, Dion is seen as a sign of Liberal apathy

IDNUMBER 200706140077
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A17
COLUMN: National Affairs
BYLINE: Chantal Hebert
SOURCE: Torstar News Service
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 525

Six months into Liberal Leader Stephane Dion's tenure, the best that can be said about his party's fortunes is that they are only as flat as those of the Conservatives. Over the past year, neither of the main parties in the House of Commons has managed to move the needle its way.

But if some of the top reasons for the stall in Conservative support are policy-related, the same cannot be said of the Liberals who sit on the popular side of most national arguments, starting with the environment and Canada's role in Afghanistan. And while the party does share that territory with the NDP and the Bloc Quebecois, neither can be described as being on a roll these days.

Dion also has the benefit of the stronger team in Parliament. His seatmates bring more governing experience to their tasks in opposition and larger profiles nationally. Yet none of that is translating into a surge in support.

Some of Dion's current challenges are predicaments familiar to former leaders of the opposition of every persuasion.

All leaders need time to grow into their jobs and, in the past, it is those who have had the luxury of doing so who have tended to be successful on the election trail.

In Dion's case, the more obvious kinks are in the process of being ironed out.

His English remains a work in progress. But it has been improving along with his performance in question period. In any event, for all the attention paid to the daily matches between the opposition and the government, there is no evidence that voters automatically equate a rabidly aggressive opposition leader with a promising prime minister.

If so many Canadians put up with Jean Chretien's fragmented English, it was because they had grown comfortable with his style. Ultimately, Dion is no more a social animal than the prime minister he is seeking to unseat. He will never set empathy records. But he does have the inside track on Harper on congeniality.

There are also signs that fatigue in the rest of Canada with leaders from Quebec will not, on its own, be enough to stop voters from turning to the Dion-led Liberal party. To wit, the respectable Liberal score in Atlantic Canada where the Conservatives are enduring a lasting budget backlash.

Dion failing to ignite Liberal fires; So closely associated with the old guard, Dion is seen as a sign of Liberal apathy

But Quebec is inexorably dragging the Liberals down and there are precious few indications that Dion or his advisers have a clue as to how to stop their party's ongoing slide into electoral oblivion.

In his home province, Dion is now the least popular of the four federal leaders, behind the NDP's Jack Layton.

In recent polls, the Liberal party was pegged in the low teens in francophone Quebec, a score so dismal as to spook all but politically suicidal candidates from running in the next election.

Last December, many Liberals saw Dion as a shortcut to a Quebec recovery. They calculated that the native son factor would offset their party's dismal 2006 election score.

But in Quebec the victory of a candidate so closely associated with the Liberal record in power was widely seen as confirmation that the party saw no need to rebrand itself.

Today, that sense is keeping the Bloc alive and giving the Conservatives and the NDP hopes for a larger place on the Quebec landscape.

Until that changes, the chance that Dion will lead the Liberals to power will remain slim, no matter how much he improves his act in the Commons or outside his home province.

Chantal Hebert appears on Mondays and Thursdays.

Troop demand leaves Forces 'struggling' to train; Courses may be cancelled as reservists in Afghanistan unavailable to teach

IDNUMBER 200706140127
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: The Vancouver Sun
WORD COUNT: 528

The Canadian Forces, squeezed by the Afghanistan conflict, may be forced to cancel half the training courses for regular and reserve soldiers scheduled for this summer in Western Canada.

The training squeeze, caused by the unavailability of qualified officers to teach troops, could cause a shortage of reservists in 2009 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper decides to extend the mission past February of that year, according to one reserve officer.

"We're still struggling to find trainers, there's no question about that," said Lt.-Col. Tom Manley, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders reserve unit, which has generated a disproportionate number of volunteers for the Afghanistan mission.

"And there's a chance we simply may not get everyone trained that could potentially deploy, so we may have to leave some behind (in 2009) because they didn't get the training they needed," he said this week.

Lt.-Col. Manley said the trainer shortage is the result of so many experienced soldiers -- who would normally lead training sessions -- preparing for the next Afghanistan rotation headed by western Canadian soldiers in the first half of 2008.

Lt.-Col. Manley spoke about the shortage of trainers at an appearance in Calgary in February before the Senate national security committee.

Col. Art Wriedt, commanding officer of the Calgary-based 41 Canadian Brigade Group, told senators that recruiting and training reservists for a possible 2009 mission is a "big worry."

The Defence Department's website says only 18 of 40 summer courses, scheduled in Alberta, B.C. and Manitoba, are expected to go ahead.

Of the rest, six are likely to be cancelled and 16 are flagged yellow as courses that "may be cancelled."

But Lt.-Col. Shane Bridgeman, a regular force officer at Land Forces Western Area in Edmonton, said many, if not all, of those courses could still go ahead.

Reservists -- volunteer soldiers who take leaves from their jobs -- have typically made up 12 to 14 per cent of the 2,500-person contingent in Afghanistan.

Troop demand leaves Forces 'struggling' to train; Courses may be cancelled as reservists in Afghanistan un

But reserve units are under increased pressure to find recruits and are expected to make up 20 per cent of the rotation in the first half of 2008, which will be led by a battalion from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment in Edmonton. Lt.-Col. Bridgeman said the army has faced similar training challenges in the recent past, and said the comments from the reserve officers reflect the growing pressure on that increasingly important component of the Canadian military.

"The system is routinely under stress," he said.

"We're quite used to managing the priorities. This is probably the first time that individual (reserve) units have seen that strain to this extent, because they're generating more people for overseas than they ever have before. Suddenly, it's all apparent to them."

Defence Department officials, citing a recent commitment from army commander Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, say the availability of trainers fluctuates, but the military has always been able to meet its commitments.

"It's premature for us to go out and speculate on any kind of mandate, past what the government has given us," said spokesman Maj. Daryl Morrell.

New Democratic Party defence critic Dawn Black learned of the trainer shortage after receiving a call from a concerned reservist in B.C.

"It just shows totally how overstretched our Canadian Forces are in terms of this mission in Afghanistan," said Ms. Black, adding the military's ability to handle security at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler could be jeopardized.

A military spokeswoman wouldn't comment on the Olympics issue.

"At this point we have not received a formal request for assistance from the RCMP," said Capt. Bonnie Golbeck.

Caswell will be remembered in Dragoon memorial tattoo

IDNUMBER 200706140126
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: The National Post
WORD COUNT: 143

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Trooper Darryl Caswell and Cpl. Wade Wick, crew members in the same Coyote armoured vehicle, had made a vow. The two close friends would each buy tattoos to commemorate buddies from their unit of the Royal Canadian Dragoons who were killed in an explosion in April.

Cpl. Wick said yesterday he is more determined than ever to get the memorial tattoo when he returns to Canada in August.

Now, though, he will have to add another name: that of Trooper Caswell, killed Monday when the Coyote hit a powerful mine.

For members of the Dragoons' reconnaissance squadron, whose job often involves pushing ahead into uncharted territory, such tragedies are becoming a fact of life in Afghanistan.

Trooper Caswell was killed Monday evening, as his Coyote led a re-supply convoy along a remote, bumpy road up to a base north of Kandahar city. He was the 57th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan since 2002.

Chechen, Arab fighters create insurgent 'sanctuary'; Broad support for Taliban feared in south

IDNUMBER 200706140125
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: The National Post
WORD COUNT: 426

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Chechen and Arab fighters have flooded into the latest hotspot for Taliban activity in southern Afghanistan, helping turn it into an insurgent "sanctuary," a senior Canadian army officer said yesterday.

Unknown numbers of foreign militants have infiltrated the Shahwali Kot district north of Kandahar City in recent weeks, said Lt.-Col. Rob Walker, who commands the Canadian battle group.

A soldier from Bracebridge, Ont., Trooper Darryl Caswell, was killed Monday while trying to bring supplies to Canadian and American forces battling those fighters in the upper part of Shahwali Kot.

"The insurgents decided they are going to mass within that area, and there are a lot of foreign fighters there — Chechens and Arabs," said Lt.-Col. Walker. "It's a bit of a sanctuary, so ISAF (the International Security Assistance Force) has decided we need to go up there to confront them, so that's where the fighting is."

Soldiers of the U.S. 82nd Airborne and American special forces have already been combating insurgents in the district. They have been aided by Canadian artillery units, whose M-777s are the most advanced big guns in the Afghan theatre, capable of hurling shells up to 30 kilometres.

The NATO troops are having an impact on the imported fighters, said Lt.-Col. Walker, adding that reports suggest the gunmen "are taking some pretty good losses over the last couple of weeks since they've been there."

Reports of Arabs and other foreign combatants in Afghan-istan always strike an ominous note, suggesting there is broader support for the insurgency, at least outside the country. It is not the first time that NATO has reported such sightings.

The Canadian army maintained it faced off against Arab militants during fierce combat in the Panjwai district west of Kandahar last year. And al-Qaeda has released videos it claims show Arabs battling alongside insurgents in Afghanistan.

Lt.-Col. Walker could not say exactly how many of the foreign gunmen may have gathered in Shahwali Kot. Canada had a presence there last spring and summer, but then pulled out.

Since then, insurgents have filled the vacuum. Yesterday, for instance, Canadian troops fought a two-hour

battle with the Taliban in the Zhari district west of Kandahar City, the area where Canadian soldiers have seen the most action of late, said Lt.-Col. Walker.

While there has been an upsurge in such "asymmetric" tactics by insurgents lately, there are also signs that average Afghans are siding against the Taliban, said Lt.-Col. Walker.

He related the story of a group of village elders who openly urged Taliban fighters to stay away from their community.

"They could see Taliban in the area ... and they read verses of the Koran and asked them to leave, because they didn't want fighting in the area," the officer said.

Soldier lauded as 'incredible friend'

IDNUMBER 200706140170
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: National
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Color Photo: Department Of National Defence / Trooper DarrylCaswell ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 400

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Trooper Darryl Caswell and Corporal Wade Wick, crew members in the same Coyote armoured vehicle, had made a vow. The two close friends would each buy tattoos to commemorate buddies from their unit of the Royal Canadian Dragoons who were killed in an explosion in April.

Cpl. Wick said yesterday he is more determined than ever to get the memorial tattoo when he returns to Canada in August.

Now, though, he will have to add another name: that of Trooper Caswell himself.

Trooper Caswell was killed on Monday when the Coyote hit a powerful mine.

For members of the Dragoons reconnaissance squadron, whose job often involves pushing ahead into uncharted territory, such tragedies are becoming a fact of life in Afghanistan. Trooper Caswell's crew, especially, could not ignore the reality, since their junior status meant they were almost always the lead vehicles in convoys, and most likely to trigger a mine or be targeted by some other sort of bomb.

In March, they were hit with an improvised explosive device that shook them up but did not hurt anyone badly. Later, they were in an ambush.

"After the first IED strike ... it was just such a great relief to hear everybody's voice over the [intercom], and we just laughed about it for days," Cpl. Wick said.

"We all knew the risks ... Us being the first to be hit by everything was a well-known, accepted risk.."

Trooper Caswell was killed as his Coyote led a resupply convoy along a remote and bumpy road up to a base used by U.S. infantry and Canadian artillery units north of Kandahar city. He was the 57th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan since 2002.

Cpl. Wick and another crew member were injured.

Trooper Caswell was known to his comrades "as a brave man, who lived by the seat of his pants, a seriously dedicated soldier always stepping forward to volunteer," Major Malcolm Berry, an army chaplain, told hundreds of soldiers at a ramp ceremony.

Cpl. Wick and Trooper Steve Davidson, the fallen soldier's best friend, lauded their buddy yesterday as someone who would think of others first and be quick to lift spirits with his wit and good humour.

"He's just been an incredible friend to me ... I can safely say he made me the man I am today," said Trooper Davidson, another member of the "Recce" squadron, as it is known colloquially. "I don't know what I'll do without him."

Trooper Caswell's nickname was Ricky Bobby, after the main character in the movie Talladega Nights, a Will Ferrell comedy about race car drivers.

"He always wanted to go fast," said Cpl. Wick. "We'd constantly be yelled at over the net to slow down, because he just wanted to tear up the roads."

War in words and sketches

IDNUMBER 200706140169
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: National
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Color Photo: Richard Johnson, National Post / TrooperDavidson ;
BYLINE: Richard Johnson
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 294

Richard Johnson of the National Post is in Afghanistan, continuing a tradition of news combat art dating back to before the First World War. This is an edited excerpt from his blog:

June 14 In the afternoon, I tagged along on a television interview of two Royal Canadian Dragoons who were good friends of Trooper Darryl Caswell, a fellow Dragoon killed two days ago in a convoy about 40 km north of Kandahar city.

I was not sketching. I was there only to observe and listen. I only took a few photos because I felt so awkward because their pain was so obvious — this is something I will have to overcome.

I quickly snapped a few out-of-focus shots as Corporal Wade Wick broke down, and his buddy Trooper Steve Davidson helped him hold it together. I took the photos —all of them bad—and my imprinted memory of the image and got out my drawing pad.

I am not happy with the way it looks, but it is accurate to what I saw, and it seems to hold onto some, if not all, of the power of the moment.

After that I worked on a portrait of Trooper Davidson replying clear-eyed to a question about how he was dealing with the loss of his friend: "I am waiting for him to walk through the door," he said. June 13 The flight into Kandahar turned out to be surprisingly luxurious. But it was a last fleeting glimpse of luxury.

After takeoff, the view from the plane showed a beautiful, dust-silhouetted dawn over Dubai. Then as we followed the coast east and crossed over the Gulf of Aden we somehow moved first backwards in time and then through space to another planet as we crossed into the desert of Iran and then Afghanistan.

NATIONALPOST.COM

For more sketches of the life of Canadian troops in Kandahar, visit Richard Johnson's blog at nationalpost.com/afghanistan.

rjohnson@nationalpost.com

War in words and sketches

IDNUMBER 200706140167
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: National
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Color Photo: Richard Johnson, National Post / The view of work huts at Kandahar airfield. ;
BYLINE: Tom Blackwel
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 344

Reporter Tom Blackwell is in Afghanistan reporting for the National Post and CanWest News Service. This is an edited excerpt from his blog.

Trooper Darryl Caswell met his fate Monday in typical fashion for Afghanistan: without warning, without a chance to do anything about it and with a minimum of spectacle. He was a brave man, exposing himself to additional danger by routinely driving his Coyote armoured car at the front of convoys. Yet it could have been me or any of another 20 or so people who died that night. I was part of Trooper Caswell's resupply convoy as it made its way along a winding, narrow and bumpy dirt road to a U.S.–Canadian base in the north of Kandahar province.

Such trips are surprisingly monotonous for passengers — hours of sitting in a hot, cramped steel can, usually without even windows through which to view the passing countryside.

At about 6:30 p.m., our convoy of a dozen or so vehicles slowed to a stop. The trip that started around noon had been marked by delays and painfully slow driving. Eventually, though, the crew commander turned around to inform us there had been a contact — military jargon for some kind of violent encounter with the enemy. Up-front soldiers were assessing the situation. It didn't sound like much.

The minutes ticked away, and still there was no movement. The crew commander, who sits or stands in a little compartment just behind the driver where he can operate a machine gun, turned around and told one of the soldiers to put on a headset so he could listen to the radio communication.

The artilleryman donned the earphones, then relayed the message: "The lead Coyote was hit by a land mine. There's one VSA and one slightly injured," he said. I looked at him blankly, then asked an embarrassing question. What's a VSA? "Vital signs absent," he said, maintaining his military cool. "A death."

NATIONALPOST.COM

Read more news and insight from the scene of the war in Afghanistan on Tom Blackwell's blog at nationalpost.com/afghanistan.

rjohnson@nationalpost.com

KEYWORDS: AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY; AUTOMOBILES

An expression of their rights, or of their naivete?

IDNUMBER 200706140118
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.06.14
EDITION: National
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A21
BYLINE: Elysia Pan
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 149

This anti-war group states that Canada's military activities in Afghanistan constitute "war crimes." Although I do not advocate war or violence in any form, I believe it is our duty as Canadians to support the decisions made by our government. This attack on the families of Canadian heroes who are fighting to protect the peace is not only immature (because it was done through anonymous letters) and a display of intolerance, but possibly criminal. Although the goal of the letter may have been to bring an opposing opinion to light, it was done in a matter that is offensive and perhaps intimidating to the families of soldiers.

This is very disappointing. Instead of rallying behind our nation to show patriotism, attacks are being made against those who most embody Canadian patriotism.

Elysia Pan, age 16, Ottawa.

KEYWORDS: 0

An expression of their rights, or of their naivete?

IDNUMBER 200706140115

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PAGE: A21

BYLINE: Gerry Mawdsley

SOURCE: National Post

WORD COUNT: 65

It's a free country. Whether you agree with someone or not, they are free to protest, and even send antiwar letters to Canadian soldiers. I am sure, if we ever asked, that the majority of Canadians don't want our troops over in Afghanistan. Our soldiers should be welcoming free speech, not discouraging it.

Gerry Mawdsley, Delta, B.C.

KEYWORDS: 0

An expression of their rights, or of their naivete?

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ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Phil Carpenter, CanWest News Service /Protesters in Sherbrooke, Que., fly the flag upside down during a rally against Canada's military role in Afghanistan. ;

BYLINE: Bashir Jamalzadah

SOURCE: National Post

WORD COUNT: 220

Re: Anti-War Letter Angers Soldiers, June 12.

I was shocked when I read this article about the letters being sent out by an anti-war group to the residences of military personnel awaiting deployment to Afghanistan. These people, who pretend to fight for a good cause, are ignorant about the realities in Afghanistan, my country of birth.

As a proud Canadian, I know first-hand what our troops have accomplished in Afghanistan. I worked as a language and cultural adviser to the commander of the battle group for 10 months and then for the brigade commander of the Canadian Forces for four months in Kandahar. I travelled more than 11,000 kilometres within Kandahar and Helmand provinces and talked to many people, mostly villagers. I know how important our troops are to the Afghan people.

Our troops are not there to kill, but to bring peace and help civilians have a better life. Along with risking their lives to fight terrorism, they are building schools, roads, clinics and irrigation canals, as well as providing clean drinking water.

Every Canadian soldier who serves in Afghanistan is a hero, not only to me but to all Afghans who have suffered through three decades of war, misery and interference from neighbours. I expect every Canadian to support our troops in Afghanistan: Their presence is vital to that country.

Bashir Jamalzadah, Vancouver.

KEYWORDS: 0

An expression of their rights, or of their naivete?

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PAGE: A21
BYLINE: Larry Douglas
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 108

This is supposed to be a democracy, with freedom of speech one of its rights. And so it grieves me when I read articles like this.

If not directly, then subtly, there always seems to be the charge of being "unpatriotic" if one offers an opinion that is not aligned with pro-war groups. I am as patriotic as anyone, but there are many of us that are opposed to this war in Afghanistan. Our culture cannot be imposed on another culture, just like we would not want their culture imposed upon us.

So, soldiers and others, suck it up. We support you as soldiers, just not the cause.

Larry Douglas, Comox, B.C.

KEYWORDS: 0

Afghan poppies could save lives

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PUBLICATION: National Post
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SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A21
BYLINE: Norine MacDonald
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 245

Re: Buying Afghan Poppies No Solution, letter to the editor, June 5.

Colonel Brian MacDonald claims that there is no global shortage of morphine. I would like to point out that the International Narcotics Control Board acknowledges that six countries — Canada, the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia — consume more than 80% of the world's morphine. That leaves millions of people, particularly cancer and HIV/ AIDS sufferers in developing countries, to live and die in unnecessary pain with little or no access.

The global supply and demand of opium-based medicines is a vicious circle. Due to endemic under-prescription and restricted supplies, many governments' official estimated requirements rarely reflect the actual need for opium-based medicines, such as morphine and codeine.

This under-prescription leads to serious errors when calculating how much morphine and codeine is needed for future years.

Given that the international manufacture of opium-based medicines is restricted by these official estimates, global stocks are insufficient to meet any increases in prescription levels.

The Senlis Council—an international policy think-tank — has developed a village-based poppy for medicine model, as a means of bringing illegal poppy cultivation under control in an immediate yet sustainable manner.

This would replace the current destructive U.S. policy of forced crop eradication, which is driving poppy farmers into poverty and into the ranks of the Taliban. It is also wholly ineffective — last year cultivation was up by 60% despite large-scale crop eradication.

Norine MacDonald, president and lead field researcher, The Senlis Council, Kabul, Afghanistan.

KEYWORDS: 0

Afghanistan's silenced female voices

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SECTION: Issues & Ideas

PAGE: A23

ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Shah Marai, AFP, Getty Images /Mourners surround the body of slain Afghan journalist Zakia Zaki. ;

BYLINE: Khorshied Samad

SOURCE: National Post

WORD COUNT: 758

The recent murders of two well-respected Afghan women journalists have shocked the Afghan people, especially those brave female activists and journalists who continue to fight for freedom of expression and equality in their war-stricken nation.

Zakia Zaki, 38, was shot seven times while she lay sleeping with her 10-month-old child. (The baby, along with her five other children, thankfully was unharmed.) Ms. Zaki was a role model, working tirelessly to defend her people's rights. Since the fall of the Taliban, she was the station manager of Radio-Solh, or Peace Radio (once supported with Canadian aid money) in Jabal-Seraj, just north of Kabul, in addition to being the headmistress of a girls high school and a political activist.

Ms. Zaki was killed just six days after the murder of a popular reporter and anchorwoman from the private television station Shamshad TV, in Kabul. Shekaiba Sanga Amaaj, 22, was shot in her home in Kabul, reportedly after refusing the advances of a relative who'd asked for her hand in marriage. (This same relative allegedly had been involved in a previous kidnapping attempt against Ms. Amaaj's younger sister.)

While police claim her killing was based on personal, not political, motives, the barbaric murder of Ms. Zaki appears to have been perpetrated by terrorists. The targeting of such prominent figures, which began with the murder of gender-rights activist Ama Jan in Kandahar last year, should be seen as a test of will between violent Islamists and those who long for a free, pluralistic Afghanistan. For those in the West who call for a premature pullout of NATO's military forces from Afghanistan, such murders demonstrate what is at stake.

These valiant Afghan women personify courage in a country still reeling from the cumulative effects of nearly 30 years of invasion, political upheaval, acute poverty and the oppressive cruelty of the Taliban regime and al-Qaeda's transnational terrorism. Despite significant strides over the past five years, Afghan women continue to be the nation's most vulnerable group.

The statistics are staggering. Afghan women still suffer the highest maternal mortality rate in

the world, with an estimated one Afghan woman dying in childbirth every 30 minutes; one out of four Afghan children will not live to see their fifth birthday; illiteracy levels hover around 96% for women in the rural areas; the average lifespan for an Afghan woman is 44 years, 10 years younger than the average for women in the region; Afghan girls continue to be married off at puberty due to poverty and cultural traditions; and domestic violence is a rising social problem, reflecting the wounded psyche of a traumatized nation. The latest statistics may have improved slightly, but conditions still wear away at the hope and optimism people felt when the Taliban were driven from power in late 2001.

And yet some Westerners — including some politicians and activists right here in Canada — want to abandon the Afghans once again, as the West did in the early 1990s, to the poisonous agenda of extremists.

The other option is to stay the course — as difficult, harrowing and unpredictable as it may be.

I, for one, hold out for the more difficult path— the road less travelled in this weary day and age. I believe that we must take the higher moral ground against our common enemies, and maintain our efforts at building peace, security and economic improvement for the Afghan people.

Having worked and lived in Afghanistan as a journalist for a few years among these brave people, I made a promise, as did the international community, that we would not let them down yet again. For the sake of victims such as Zakia, Shekaiba and Ama Jan, and the brave fallen soldiers from Canada and other countries who have served in Afghanistan, we need to show our resolve and continued commitment.

—Khorshied Samad is the former correspondent and Kabul bureau chief for Fox News, former reporter for ABC News and the wife of the Afghan ambassador to Canada. She is also the co-curator of the photo-journalism exhibition, *Voices on the Rise: Afghan Women Making the News*, which is focused on the lives and work of Afghan women journalists. The exhibition will appear at the Alliance Francaise de Toronto at 24 Spadina Rd. from June 14 to July 5, then will be exhibited at the Toronto Public Library City Hall branch from July 9 to Aug. 31.

KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM

Pakistani vehicles facing Afghan ban

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COLUMN: Fast Track
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DATELINE: CHAMAN
SOURCE: The Gazette; AFP; Reuters
WORD COUNT: 41

Afghanistan is to ban private Pakistani vehicles from crossing into its territory at this key southern border for "security reasons," an official told reporters yesterday in Spin Boldak district in Afghanistan's Kandahar province.

Afghan conflict puts squeeze on training for troops

Military could be forced to cancel half its courses

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PAGE: A1

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 362

CNS OTTAWA — The Canadian Forces, squeezed by the Afghanistan conflict, may be forced to cancel half the training courses for regular and reserve soldiers scheduled for this summer in western Canada.

The training squeeze, caused by the unavailability of qualified officers to teach troops, could cause a shortage of reservists in 2009 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper decides to extend the mission past February of that year, according to one reserve officer.

"We're still struggling to find trainers, there's no question about that," said Lt.-Col. Tom Manley, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders reserve unit, which has generated a disproportionate number of volunteers for the Afghanistan mission.

"And there's a chance we simply may not get everyone trained that could potentially deploy, so we may have to leave some behind (in 2009) because they didn't get the training they needed," he said this week.

Meanwhile, foreign and Afghan insurgents drawn by the sound and fury of battle are in the northern region of Kandahar province to fight coalition forces trying to reassert government control, says the commander of the Canadian battle group.

Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said Wednesday recent fighting in the Sha Wali Kot district has attracted Taliban insurgents from across the province as well as Arab and Chechen fighters from abroad.

"They are drawn to the sounds of the drums and the guns so that's where they are moving at this point," Walker told reporters at the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield.

On Wednesday, Canadian troops were involved in a two-hour firefight in Zhari district west of Kandahar city, he said. There was no mention of any coalition casualties.

Manley said the trainer shortage is the result of so many experienced soldiers — who would normally lead training sessions — preparing for the next Afghanistan rotation headed by western Canadian soldiers in the first half of 2008.

The national defence department's website says only 18 of 40 summer courses, scheduled in Alberta, B.C. and Manitoba, are expected to go ahead.

Of the rest, six are likely to be cancelled and 16 are flagged yellow as courses that "may be cancelled." But Lt.-Col. Shane Bridgeman, a regular force officer at Land Forces Western Area in Edmonton, cautioned that many, if not all, of those courses could go ahead.

— CanWest / CP {Ottawa ONT}