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Navy looking into drones to help with sea defence

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National Defence plans to conduct a study next year on how the country's frigates can safely launch and recover unmanned aerial vehicles at sea, and is asking for private companies with expertise to step forward.

The army and air force have been using drones, which are controlled by technicians on the ground, for the last five years.

Remote-controlled aircraft have been doing yeoman's service in Afghanistan since 2003 scouting for threats to troops on the ground. The army also employs the Skylark, which resembles a model aircraft.

Britain turns focus on Afghanistan

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As its military winds down the campaign in Iraq, Britain is pouring more soldiers and aid money into Afghanistan to fight a resurgent Taliban and booming drug trade it says pose a direct threat to Britons.

Britain's ambassador in Kabul said the British government began increasing its focus on Afghanistan shortly before the end of former prime minister Tony Blair's tenure in June, and made it even more of a priority under Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Afghanistan "matters to us because a high proportion of the terrorism investigations in the U.K. can be traced back to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area," Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles told The Associated Press in an interview this week.

"It matters to us because 90 per cent of the heroin on British streets comes from Afghanistan, and it matters to us because it is desperately poor, and we have a commitment through the International Development Act of tackling poverty around the world," he said.

Britain will increase its troop strength in Afghanistan to 7,700 by the year's end, up from 7,000 today and 3,600 a year ago, in what Cowper-Coles labelled a "sensible tactical adjustment" based on commanders' advice.

British troops are responsible for Helmand province in southern Afghanistan -- scene of some of the heaviest fighting over the last two years and the largest opium poppy-growing region in the world.

First of new tanks arrives in Afghanistan

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: CANADIAN PRESS / The first of 20 Leopard 2 tanksCanada has leased from Germany arrives in Kandahar yesterday morning aboard an Antonov transport aircraft. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 465

The first of 20 newer Leopard 2 tanks for the Canadian Forces landed in Kandahar yesterday but crews must still resort to water-filled cooling vests to cut the stifling heat inside the hulking steel beasts.

The tank, the first of 20 leased from Germany, was delivered by an Antonov transport aircraft in the early-morning hours.

The Leopard 2 tanks promise more firepower, better landmine protection, longer range and better mobility than the 30-year-old Leopard 1 Canadians now use in Afghanistan.

But for all that technical superiority, the Leopard 2 still doesn't have air conditioning -- a key drawback in a land where temperatures regularly reach well into the 40s Celsius and tank crews have suffered dehydration.

To avoid wilting in the extreme heat, the four crew members -- pilot, gunner, loader and crew leader -- wear cooling vests to circulate chilled water over their bodies.

"I don't know if it's the best way, but I can tell you it works," said Capt. Craig Volstad of the Lord Strathcona's Horse armoured regiment based in Edmonton.

The tank rolled off the Antonov aircraft two hours late, with mechanical problem in one of its turrets. Military spokesperson Capt. Hubert Genest called it a "minor glitch that will take 15 minutes to fix."

The 19 other 62-tonne tanks leased from the German army are expected to be delivered to Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan over the next few weeks.

Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of the Canadians in southern Afghanistan, says the Leopard 2 tanks, specially modified to resist roadside bombs, will offer better protection to armoured crews.

"Right now, enemy forces have weapons that could pierce a tank and injure a soldier inside," Juneau said. "With a vehicle that offers better protection, we are improving the odds of survival of the crew."

In Kandahar province, insurgents have rarely targeted tanks with roadside bombs, the biggest threat currently facing Canadian troops.

Instead, the Taliban have more frequently used improvised explosive devices against lighter armoured vehicles such as the Bison, Nyala RG-31 and the LAV3 -- troop-transport vehicles that are more vulnerable to such attacks.

Lt.-Col. Stephane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team in Afghanistan, has said that the new tanks won't be significantly reducing the threat to Canadian soldiers from roadside bombings.

But he said the tanks will likely make a difference in the field because they project an image of strength.

"It's another weapon in our arsenal," Lafaut said.

"It could give our soldiers more confidence and be a bit of a shock for enemy troops."

Juneau said the modern tanks will open the route to more dangerous regions of Kandahar and boost the security and confidence of troops.

"With a superior firepower and mobility, I can tell you that as a foot soldier I'm happy to be led by a tank and the bigger the tank, the further it shoots, the heavier the armour, the more secure I feel," Juneau said.

The delivery of the 20 German tanks is the first step in the overhaul of Canadian heavy armour in Afghanistan.

Starting in the fall of 2008, the army is expecting to get the first of the 100 slightly used tanks Canada has bought from the Netherlands.

The first deliveries will come just months before the Canadian government's commitment to Afghanistan is supposed to expire in February 2009.

The cost of the acquisition is \$640 million.

The Canadian Forces are exploring cooling options for those tanks.

Afghan mission will test MacKay

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Peter MacKay doesn't have much time to learn the defence minister's job before making what for some Canadians will be life-and-death decisions. He takes over the ministry not only when the country is at war with the Taliban and its extremist supporters in Afghanistan but also at a time the mission is being questioned by the opposition here in Canada.

MacKay comes to the post with the advantage of at least knowing what got his predecessor into trouble. Gordon O'Connor, the former minister, was either misinformed or confused about the way Canadian-captured prisoners were being treated, and he appeared to differ significantly with his top soldier, Gen. Rick Hillier, on when Afghan troops would be ready to replace Canadian soldiers. Basically, O'Connor lacked the communication skills that create confidence.

The new minister should be able to avoid some of these problems. Despite the occasional gaffe, MacKay is a seasoned politician and a good communicator. His appointment shows the seriousness with which Prime Minister Stephen Harper regards the Afghan file. MacKay is going to have to muster all his skills in order to give both Canadian troops and Canadians generally a feeling that the government is pursuing the right course in Afghanistan.

Just look at the situation MacKay has to deal with. His leader, the prime minister, has changed his perspective on Afghanistan from promising that he was not about to "cut and run" to saying that he would not keep combat troops in Afghanistan after February 2009 unless there's some type of consensus. That's not a very clear position.

The new minister has to proceed at a time when Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has already said he would not extend Canada's role in Afghanistan beyond the February 2009 commitment. Furthermore, Jack Layton, leader of the New Democratic Party, has called for Canadian combat troops to leave.

Despite Dion's and Layton's opinions, MacKay should be mindful of the reason why Canadian troops went to Afghanistan in the first place. A Liberal government sent them to help fight Taliban forces that had given assistance to al-Qaida, which had launched the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States. Canadians died in those attacks. Interestingly, the United Kingdom is currently increasing its troop level in Afghanistan at the same time that it is removing its troops from Iraq.

As a new minister, MacKay has a chance to reassess Canada's role in Afghanistan and to see what Canada can do with its allies to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a launching ground for an attack on the West. Of course, Canada cannot act on its own. We are part of a NATO campaign. But from his office in the Defence Ministry, MacKay may be able to chart a clearer military course than the country has had for some time.

First of Canada's 20 leased tanks arrive in Kandahar; Cdn. Forces take delivery of tanks replacing aging Leopard 1 version

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COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
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The first of 20 Leopard 2 tanks Canada has leased from Germany arrived in Kandahar yesterday morning aboard an Antonov transport aircraft.

The tank operators encountered a minor technical glitch with the turrets, but military spokesman Capt. Hubert Genest says the problem can be repaired easily.

The rest of the tanks will be shipped in the coming weeks. They are replacing the aging Leopard 1 tanks, which were made three decades ago and are currently being used in battle.

Col. Christian Juneau, the deputy-commander of Canadians in southern Afghanistan, says the new tanks will increase security because of their superior firing capability and protection from landmines.

But Lt.-Col. Stephane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team in Afghanistan, says the new tanks won't give Canadian soldiers much more protection from roadside bombings.

He says insurgents tend to target less robust vehicles, like Canada's LAV3, Nyala and Bison armoured vehicles. Still, he says the tanks will likely make a "difference" in the field because they project an image of strength.

"It's another weapon in our arsenal," Lafaut said. "It could give our soldiers more confidence and be a bit of a shock for enemy troops."

Over the longer term, Canada will get 100 more Leopard 2 tanks from the Netherlands.

The first shipment is set for the fall of 2008.

MILITARY MENTORING: TRAINING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY 'We have trusted these guys with our lives'

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SECTION: Column

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Kandahar AFGHANISTAN

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CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD KANDAHAR So much of what Canada's small team of soldier mentors does with the Afghan National Army is so hard to measure, if not invisible to the naked eye, that it's a little like being a parent, says outgoing commanding officer Lieutenant-Colonel Wayne Eyre.

"It's like watching your kids grow," he says. "It's hard when you're right in there. You've got to take a step back." So three or four weeks ago, as the end of the six-month tour of the 90-member OMLT (Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team) approached, Lt.-Col. Eyre and his soldiers did the equivalent of what moms and dads do when they look to marks in the kitchen doorway to get a handle on how much their children have sprouted – they looked for milestones.

There are plenty.

When this rotation of the OMLT arrived last February, it was mentoring less than 20 per cent of soldiers from the ANA's 205 (or Hero) Brigade; as Lt.-Col. Eyre's group departed southern Afghanistan this week, it was mentoring more than 80 per cent. In February, the 2nd Kandak (or battalion) was using its medical platoon to man a checkpoint, with medics still being regularly pressed into service as extra riflemen; now, medics are treating wounded. In February, ANA soldiers were still scrounging for equipment and supplies wherever they could, as they had learned to do; now, they get them through the ANA's own logistics kandak.

But more important, Lt.-Col. Eyre says, is that at the kandak level – the 2nd Kandak, which operates in the volatile Zhari-Panwahi area just west of Kandahar city, is the battalion with which the OMLT has worked most closely – ANA commanders are planning operations.

"Up to that point," Lt.-Col. Eyre says, "it was all coalition-led [the International Security Assistance Force, commanded in the south by multinational NATO forces]. The battle group would say, 'We think we need an operation here, we'd like you to participate.' . . . Now, they're [the ANA] at the stage where their kandak commander would say, 'We think we need to go into this area and this is what I'd like to do, and this is what I need the battle group to provide me, whether a quick reaction force or artillery.' " It's called building capacity, and it's not just the focus of Canadian efforts here, it's also the only way, Lt.-Col. Eyre believes, for the ANA and ultimately for Afghanistan to succeed.

"We're teaching them to function on their own," he says. "We've been very, very careful not to build a mirror image of ourselves.

MILITARY MENTORING: TRAINING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY 'We have trusted these guys with our lives'

It would be well within our comfort zone to create an army in our own image, but we've got to create something that's going to last after we depart. And we have to leave some time." Afghanistan history teaches that "every foreign army is eventually seen as [an] occupying force, so the longer we have a big footprint here, the more chances, we're going to have that." Key to the collaborative planning, Lt.-Col. Eyre says, is trust.

"We bring them into the planning process early – these guys have been fighting here for decades, they know the ground – and not everybody is comfortable with that because there's the operational security issue." What he means, of course, is the fear that plans will be leaked to Taliban forces, putting Canadian and coalition soldiers into jeopardy.

"But you have to take a risk with that," he says, "and balance the risk with the long-term development goals, and taking that risk, you also show trust, which goes a long way toward rapport." Lt.-Col. Eyre took it, and says flatly at no time was his faith misplaced; rather the opposite.

"We have trusted these guys with our lives," he says, "and the only reason a good portion of my team is alive is because the ANA kept them alive.

"We're out there in a forward operating base, in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by Taliban, a small team of coalition mentors and an ANA company – they keep us alive." The OMLT lost only one soldier, Corporal Matthew McCully, and another wounded, Sergeant Steve Powell, both of whom were hit in an IED strike in May.

Lt.-Col. Eyre learned of the bombing as he was at London's Heathrow Airport, awaiting a flight to the Caribbean to begin leave with his wife Jennifer and their two youngsters.

He'd told his deputy to call him only in the event of casualties, and was 20 minutes away from boarding the plane when he got a page; he tried calling, but couldn't get through, and spent the nine-hour flight worrying.

But as a member of the Edmonton-based 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Lt.-Col. Eyre also knew many of the seven Patricias killed from the battle group, which in total lost 22 troops. The ANA's 205 Brigade lost 12 soldiers, the 2nd Kandak three.

As soon as his team took over headquarters, Lt.-Col. Eyre became the mentor first for Brigadier-General Khair Mohammad, then for his successor, Colonel Abdul Basir. His personal experience has taught him that mentoring isn't a one-way road: He learned as much as he taught.

"First," he says, "that there are far more ways of doing things than we are trained [to recognize]. You have to accept that they will come up with solutions that are imperfect in our eyes but our eyes may not have a perfect solution.

"Patience is incredibly important. You relearn that every day.

I told the guys before we came over, if you're a perfectionist you're gonna have a nervous breakdown, so you may as well pack your bags and go home or not even come over." He divided his time between visiting his men in the field, some of whom lived and worked with the ANA for all but a week of their tour, and the 205's base near Kandahar Air Field.

This week, at a handover ceremony to the new larger version of the OMLT, headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Stephane Lafaut of the 3rd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment, or Van Doos, Col. Basir was in the audience to hear Lt.-Col. Eyre describe Afghans as "some of the most natural warriors in the world" and Lt.-Col. Eyre to hear Col.

MILITARY MENTORING: TRAINING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY 'We have trusted these guys with ou

Basir promise that "we will never forget" the Canadians who died here. "Their names will be written in the pages of the history books of Afghanistan in golden ink." The two exchanged gifts. Lt.-Col. Eyre's was a picture of Col.

Basir addressing his soldiers.

It exemplified what Lt.-Col. Eyre loves about him. "Every time that he talks to soldiers," he says, "he talks about professionalism, about keeping the local population onside, about the importance of discipline, about pride in their country and in their army, of national unity." The colonel's four-man team of bodyguards, for instance, includes a Pashtun, a Tajik, an Uzbek and a Hazara, one each from the country's dominant tribes.

"The ANA is the most successful institution of national unity this country has seen for a long, long time," Lt.-Col. Eyre says – again, not unlike his own unit, drawn from all three regular Canadian infantry regiments (the Patricias, the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Vandoos), French and English, and from across the country.

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ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: defence; foreign policy; job training; foreign aid; strife; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Wayne Eyre

ORGANIZATION NAME: Army; Armed Forces

MILITARY MENTORING: TRAINING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY 'We have trusted these guys with our

In search of a stiff upper lip

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Anthony Cary British High Commissioner Ottawa Margaret Wenté describes MacKay's Tough Sell (Aug. 16) in Afghanistan on the same day you report the debate in Britain about our own contribution to the Afghan mission (British Losing Faith As Casualty Rate Climbs – front page). We have 7,000 troops in the field, and more to come, fighting shoulder to shoulder with Canadians, and we, too, have been suffering high casualties.

The challenge is certainly great. But so is the United Nations–backed cause: to save Afghanistan from the reimposition of a medieval emirate that would consign millions of men and women to miseries they remember only too well. That is why the Afghan mission has all–party backing, and why both the Leader of the Opposition and the Foreign Secretary have visited in the past month.

Ms. Wenté is right that "the real question is what, if anything, we can realistically accomplish." Our Foreign Secretary answered that question in a recent article describing some of the progress achieved: a constitution; elections; elements of a functional democracy; the return of nearly five million refugees; and major improvements in health care, life expectancy and education.

It is, of course, for Canadians to decide the future of their mission. In reaching that decision, they should know they are not fighting alone.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Great Britain; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; strife

THE U.S. COURTS Padilla convicted on terrorism charges

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BYLINE: CURT ANDERSON

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: AP

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DATELINE: Miami FL

WORDS: 529

WORD COUNT: 478

CURT ANDERSON Associated Press MIAMI Jose Padilla, held for 3 1/2 years as an enemy combatant, was convicted yesterday of helping Islamic extremists and plotting overseas attacks in a case that came to symbolize the Bush administration's zeal to clamp down on terrorism.

But it was hardly a complete victory for the government. When Mr.

Padilla was arrested in the months after the 2001 terrorist attacks, authorities touted him as a key al-Qaeda operative who planned to detonate a radioactive dirty bomb in a U.S. city. That allegation never made it to court.

Instead, after a three-month trial and only a day and a half of deliberations, the 36-year-old and his foreign-born co-defendants were convicted of conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim people and two counts of providing material support to terrorists.

Neal Sonnett, a prominent Miami defence lawyer who heads an American Bar Association task force on treatment of enemy combatants, said the verdict proves that the U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is unnecessary to deal with terrorism suspects.

"This verdict once again demonstrates that federal courts are perfectly capable of handling terrorism cases," Mr. Sonnett said.

Mr. Padilla showed no emotion and stared straight ahead as he heard the verdict that could bring him a life prison sentence. One person in the family section started to sob.

Mr. Padilla was accused along with two others of being part of a North American support cell that provided supplies, money and recruits to groups of Islamic extremists. The defence contended they were trying to help persecuted Muslims in war zones with relief and humanitarian aid.

Attorneys for Adham Amin Hassoun and the third defendant, Kifah Wael Jayyousi, both said they intended to appeal. Mr. Hassoun is a computer programmer of Palestinian descent who was born in Lebanon.

Mr. Jayyousi is a civil engineer and public schools administrator who is a naturalized U.S. citizen originally from Jordan.

There was no immediate comment from Mr. Padilla's lawyers. They had fought for years to get his case into federal court, and he was finally added to the Miami terrorism support indictment in late 2005 just as the U.S. Supreme Court was poised to consider President George W. Bush's authority to continue detaining him.

Mr. Padilla is a Muslim convert who was born in Brooklyn and lived in Chicago. He lived in South Florida in the 1990s and was supposedly recruited by Mr. Hassoun at a mosque to become a mujahedeen fighter.

The key piece of physical evidence was a five-page form Mr. Padilla supposedly filled out in July, 2000, to attend an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan, which would also link the other two defendants to Osama bin Laden's terrorist organization.

The form, recovered by the CIA in 2001 in Afghanistan, contains seven of Mr. Padilla's fingerprints and several other personal identifiers, such as his birth date and his ability to speak Spanish, English and Arabic.

Mr. Padilla's lawyers insisted the form was far from conclusive and denied that he was a "star recruit," as prosecutors claimed, of the North American support cell intending to become a terrorist.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: United States

SUBJECT TERM:justice; terrorism; suspects

PERSONAL NAME: Jose Padilla

POLITICS: HARPER, BUSH AND CALDERON Summit unlikely to extend the scope of NAFTA Political opposition so ingrained that little progress expected to be made during meeting of Canadian, U.S. and Mexican leaders

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DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 676

WORD COUNT: 666

ALAN FREEMAN OTTAWA The leaders of Canada, the United States and Mexico may be ideological brothers but that doesn't mean they have much chance of extending the scope of the North American free-trade agreement at their summit next week.

While Canadian officials attempted to persuade journalists yesterday that "yes, there will be concrete achievements" from the 24-hour meeting at Quebec's Chateau Montebello on Monday and Tuesday between Prime Minister Stephen Harper, U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Felipe Calderon, generalities multiplied and specifics were still lacking.

The three leaders are all political conservatives with a strong belief in free markets and a desire for more continental integration.

But political opposition to the idea in their respective countries is so ingrained that they are unlikely to get very far beyond agreeing to stronger rules on non-controversial issues like toy safety, preparation for an avian-flu pandemic and the emissions from experimental nuclear reactors.

"I'm going to be very honest," said Jean-Francois Prud'homme, a Quebec-born political scientist who teaches at the Colegio de Mexico in Mexico City. "I don't think there will be very much coming out of it.

"It's my impression that it's not a good time for the idea of North America, for many domestic reasons. It's not a very popular idea." "Any kind of deepening of NAFTA for the U.S. is a non-starter for an administration that has virtually no political capital left," said Michael Shifter, vice-president of policy at the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think tank. "Bush is so wounded, it's hard to believe there is going to be a lot of initiative left." The trilateral annual summits, held under the lofty title of the Security and Prosperity Partnership, date back to 2005. The first summit took place in Waco, Tex., with the intent of expanding on NAFTA, which began life in 1994 purely as a trade agreement. But with public opposition in all three countries to the loss of sovereignty that integration would bring, the leaders have been taking baby steps towards their goal.

Instead of moving ahead with a customs union or more labour mobility – policies that would require approval by their respective legislatures – the leaders have opted for a more cautious approach, leaning instead on meetings of bureaucrats and harmonization of regulations.

"There's no attempt at this time for deeper integration," was the word from one Canadian official yesterday.

Mr. Bush's efforts to get immigration reform passed in the U.S.

Congress and regularize the status of more than 10 million illegal immigrants in the country – most of them Mexicans – have proved a complete failure as members of his Republican Party massively rejected the bill.

Mr. Calderon has laid the blame on the U.S. Congress, yet the issue still puts a chill on his relations with Mr. Bush. And to broaden his base of domestic support, Mr. Calderon has skillfully re-energized his relations with the left-leaning leaders of Brazil, Argentina and Nicaragua in recent months. He has spent time mending fences with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, a relationship that had been badly damaged under the mandate of Mr. Calderon's predecessor, Vicente Fox.

There's talk of a massive aid package from Washington to Mexico to finance improved policing and a crackdown on the drug cartels smuggling cocaine into the United States. But it's unlikely the package will be ready in time for next week's meeting.

The bilateral talks between Mr. Harper and Mr. Bush are expected to touch on the perennial issues of Canada-U.S. relations: passport rules on the border, the NATO mission in Afghanistan, climate change and the situation in the Middle East.

Mr. Calderon – who arrives with his family in Ottawa tomorrow and spends the weekend with the Harpers at the Prime Minister's official country residence at Harrington Lake – will leave his official bilateral meeting with Mr. Harper until Wednesday morning, before he heads back to Mexico City.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; United States; Mexico

SUBJECT TERM: summit conference; foreign relations; free trade

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper; George W. Bush; Felipe Calderon

POLITICS: HARPER, BUSH AND CALDERON Summit unlikely to extend the scope of NAFTA Political opp

New tanks give troops more muscle in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708170048
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.08.17
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
BYLINE: MARTIN OUELLET The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 349

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"Right now, enemy forces have weapons that could pierce a tank and injure a soldier inside," Juneau said. "With a vehicle that offers better protection, we are improving the odds of survival of the crew."

In Kandahar province, insurgents have rarely targeted tanks with roadside bombs, the biggest threat currently facing Canadian troops.

Instead, the Taliban have more frequently used improvised explosive devices against lighter armoured vehicles such as the Bison, Nyala RG-31 and the LAV3 — troop-transport vehicles that are more vulnerable to such attacks.

Lt.-Col. Stephane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team in Afghanistan, has said that the new tanks won't be significantly reducing the threat to Canadian soldiers from

roadside bombings.

But he said the tanks will likely make a difference in the field because they project an image of strength.

Base commander shifts focus to support for returning troops; Reintegrate | More than 600 soldiers expected to return to Canadian Forces Base Gagetown

IDNUMBER 200708170042
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.08.17
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PAGE: A3
BYLINE: MICHAEL STAPLES staples.michael@dailygleaner.com
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 476

Supporting troops as they return from Afghanistan will be a top priority for the commander of Canadian Forces Base Gagetown as he settles into his new job as the area's top soldier.

Col. Ken Chadder said helping troops reintegrate into society falls in line with the army's top priority — the support of operations.

More than 600 members of The Second Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (2RCR) battle group have returned or will be returning to Gagetown in the coming days and weeks.

"The reintegration of the troops that have come back — support to those who are still in theatre — and the preparation and training in support to the next company group will continue to be the main priority," Chadder said.

The commander said supporting troops as they return is just another step in an overall process.

"We obviously trained them to go over, we supported them and their families while they were overseas and now the final phase is the reintegration phase."

Chadder said if returning soldiers need additional help or support as they reintegrate into family life, he will see that it happens.

The base is responsible for troops deployed overseas as part of the last contingent and will be tracking them throughout the next few months to ensure everyone goes through reintegration, Chadder said.

Returning soldiers are met by padres, go through medical interviews and social workers are available to them, if needed.

"If somebody has had a traumatic experience in-theatre, they can make an appointment to see a (medical officer or a) social worker," Chadder said. "Or, depending on what the issue is, we have a mental-health clinic in the (permanent married quarters) that is fully manned with lots of staff (and) able to handle any of the issues that we anticipate could show up over the coming months."

Chadder said CFB Gagetown has received information from bases in Petawawa and Edmonton — which have

Base commander shifts focus to support for returning troops; Reintegrate | More than 600 soldiers17xpected

had soldiers in Afghanistan — about what should be looked for.

The new commander said the base's second priority over the coming months will be to support training. With an increase in the size of the Canadian Forces, the base will have more students coming through.

The Combat Training Centre will be busier than ever, Chadder said.

"Support to training, improvement of infrastructure and, obviously, support to the exercises and the training that (the Combat Training Centre) conducts will be a continuing priority that we will have to focus on."

Chadder, a former commandant at the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering at Gagetown from 2001 to 2004, has returned to base after a stint with Canadian Expeditionary Force Command — the organization responsible for planning and conducting most international military operations.

Since taking over command of the base on June 22 from Col. Ryan Jestin, Chadder has been familiarizing himself with his command duties and concentrating on getting his family situated in Oromocto.

"These are easy transitions and good transitions — especially if you go from a staff job to a command job," Chadder said.

"That's the kind of job that you like to transition into and something we're taught. You join the forces to command and to move into a command position, for an officer, is quite an easy transition."

Training for next deployment to Afghanistan begins in September

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PAGE: A3
BYLINE: MICHAEL STAPLES staples.michael@dailygleaner.com
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 118

The spectre of Afghanistan will not be going away any time soon for troops at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown.

Training will begin next month for soldiers from The Second Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (2RCR) and from the 4 Air Defence Regiment (4ADR).

Golf Company, along with their 4ADR counterparts — about 200 in total — will deploy in August 2008.

About 200 soldiers in total will be making the journey, base commander Col. Ken Chadder said Thursday.

The 2RCR's Golf Company last served in Afghanistan in 2005 as members of Task Force Kabul. They were key components in the team that helped the Canadian military move to Kandahar as part of the consolidation of operations in that country.

About 650 other soldiers from the 2RCR have spent the last six months in Kandahar and are now in the process of returning home.

Refurbished tank lands in Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B2

SOURCE: The Associated Press

BYLINE: Martin Ouellet

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 465

The first of 20 newer Leopard 2 tanks for the Canadian Forces landed in Kandahar yesterday, but crews must still resort to water-filled cooling vests to cut the stifling heat inside the hulking steel beasts.

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But he said the tanks will likely make a difference in the field because they project an image of strength.

"It's another weapon in our arsenal," Lafaut said. "It could give our soldiers more confidence and be a bit of a shock for enemy troops."

Juneau says he is convinced the modern tanks will open the route to more dangerous regions of Kandahar and boost the security and confidence of troops.

"With a superior firepower and mobility, I can tell you that as a foot soldier I'm happy to be led by a tank and the bigger the tank, the further it shoots, the heavier the armour, the more secure I feel," Juneau said.

The delivery of the 20 German tanks is the first step in the overhaul of Canadian heavy armour in Afghanistan.

Starting in the fall of 2008, the army is expecting to get the first of the 100 slightly used tanks Canada has bought from the Netherlands.

Peter MacKay's Afghan challenge; A foundation for greater stability is being laid, but security will remain a key part of the structure

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: Forum

PAGE: 5

BYLINE: hugh segal

PHOTO: AP The Canadian Press

ILLUSTRATION: An International Security Assistance Force convoy arrives at the site of an explosion on the outskirts of Kabul this week. The explosion killed three German nationals, police officials said.; Peter MacKay is sworn in by Kevin Lynch, Clerk of the Privy Council, as the new minister of National Defence as Prime Minister Stephen Harper looks on during a ceremony at Rideau Hall.

WORD COUNT: 1008

The new minister of defence, Peter MacKay, will inherit a department stronger and more forwardly focused than the one inherited by Gordon O'Connor from the previous administration. A strong, popular and articulate chief of the defence staff is actually a strong asset to the government and minister going forward. Changing a minister because the nature of the debate and the challenge has changed is no dishonour to the shifted incumbent; there are times and places in the history and progress of a government for different skills and abilities.

The challenge of the post-'09 Canadian deployment with NATO in Afghanistan is not just a Canadian challenge. It is very much one that NATO must face as a collectivity. Its credibility will depend on its capacity to facilitate a continued Canadian presence with strong NATO support.

Non-robust NATO players such as Spain, Belgium, Italy, Turkey and others need to be engaged more fully, both with troops on the ground and with hard assets such as heavy-lift helicopters, perhaps Pumas or Chinooks, so that Canadian commanders have more substantial options in the field than only land-based convoys. As well, Canada and the United Kingdom, as key constraints upon the Taliban in the southern provinces, must have the capacity for rapidly deployed unmanned aerial vehicle reconnaissance that is transmitting 24/7 as any land-based sorties are being executed. Parliament has every right to have substantial assurance from governments in the U.K. and Canada (whose existing commitments end in 2009) about these assets and their constructive deployment from NATO sources.

And the renewed commitment by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, in front of a trans-border tribal loyajerga in Kabul, along with his Afghan counterpart, to increase anti-terrorist engagement should not only be welcomed but in some way should be worked into the broad NATO engagement in the region. Through enhanced liaison between NATO and Pakistani navies relative to patrolling the Pakistani coastal areas, or some measure of shared intelligence, enhanced liaison or joint countermeasure initiatives in the face of extremist efforts to destabilize both Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Musharraf and the comparatively moderate regimes they lead, maximizing real co-operation will be vital to sustaining the opportunity for success of the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Increasing the development component and deepening diplomatic efforts to facilitate some political solutions wherever possible make sense, as do more intense training commitments for the Afghan National Army on the part of NATO. But without meaningful security against Taliban and al-Qaida efforts to destroy and demolish, these latter efforts and expanded engagements

Peter MacKay's Afghan challenge; A foundation for greater stability is being laid, but security will remain a key

have little chance of making progress.

Independent sources are reporting that in the non-southern provinces, Afghanistan's security context is beginning to resemble that of other developing countries. This is encouraging. While it is normal for the media to report on things not going right, when the media also report, as they have started to, on where things are not going as badly wrong, the benefits to Afghans and to the general security in the region of the Canadian-NATO commitment become far more apparent. A robust debate either this fall or early next spring will actually be a good thing for Canada, and an important thing both for NATO and our U.K. allies. No doubt the new minister's remit, along with that of his colleague, Maxime Bernier in Foreign Affairs, is to help position and frame a debate in which the most rational and appropriate results emerge with the kind of parliamentary consensus Prime Minister Stephen Harper referenced some weeks ago.

Whatever the specific dynamics in Afghanistan, a NATO withdrawal would send a message to Islamic insurgents, foreign combatants and terrorist forces that the West is not prepared to defend its way of life and its core principles of civility, tolerance and non-aggression in remote locations beyond Western nations' own shores. That would, by definition, bring the struggle closer to home, if not home itself, in Middle Eastern, European, Asian and North American locations, where governments follow a more moderate general path. It would be a seriously weak and counter-productive message to send.

There will be many who argue that there are regional issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian problem, the concern about pan-Arab poverty for the vast majority of inhabitants in the region, and even the relatively autocratic approach of many of the non-democratic governments in that same region, that must be resolved if the pressure on Afghanistan is to be relieved. There is no reason whatever to differ with the idea that much more commitment by the countries of the West on these fronts is required and justifiable. But that does not suggest that one can relent on the global security side until these problems are resolved.

We do not, in our own country, disarm local police until all problems of social exclusion, injustice, racism, poverty and other contributors to crime are overcome. Relenting on the NATO commitment in Afghanistan before some new balance has been achieved would be a dereliction of our duty to the forces in Afghanistan that are working for opportunity, stability, democracy and greater balance and social progress; an abdication to those from Canada and other NATO countries that have deployed to the region, fought bravely, and, in some cases, made the supreme sacrifice in support of the Afghan people; and our own geo-political integrity as a NATO ally and development partner.

– Hugh Segal is a senior fellow at the Queen's School of Policy Studies and a junior senator from Ontario.

First new tank set to roll

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: World

PAGE: A8

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Martin Ouellet

ILLUSTRATION: The first of 20 Leopard 2 tanks Canada has leased from Germany arrived in Kandahar on Thursday morning aboard an Antonov transport aircraft. The rest of the tanks will be shipped in the coming weeks. (MARTIN OUELLET / CP)

WORD COUNT: 245

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – The first of 20 newer Leopard 2 tanks for the Canadian Forces landed in Kandahar on Thursday but crews must still resort to water–filled cooling vests to cut the stifling heat inside the hulking steel beasts.

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The delivery of the 20 German tanks is the first step in the overhaul of Canadian heavy armour in Afghanistan.

Padilla found guilty on terrorism charges

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: News

PAGE: A8

BYLINE: Abby Goodnough N.y. Times News Service

ILLUSTRATION: Jose Padilla faces life in prison after being found guilty on terrorism charges by a federal jury on Thursday. (ALAN DIAZ / AP)

WORD COUNT: 382

MIAMI – In a major victory for the Bush administration, a federal jury here found Jose Padilla guilty on terrorism conspiracy charges Thursday after little more than a day of deliberations.

Padilla, one of the first Americans to be named an "enemy combatant" in the tense months after Sept. 11, 2001, now faces life in prison. He was released from an unprecedented military detention without charges last year, only to face criminal charges in federal court here. The government's chief evidence was an application form that government prosecutors said Padilla, 36, filled out to attend an al–Qaida training camp in Afghanistan in 2000.

Padilla's extraordinary legal journey began in May 2002, when he was arrested at Chicago's O'Hare Airport and taken into military custody. Attorney General John Ashcroft announced Padilla's capture a month later in a special news conference from Moscow, saying that an "unfolding terrorist plot to attack the United States by exploding a radioactive dirty bomb" had been disrupted, an attack with the potential to cause "mass death and injury."

He was held in isolation on a military brig in South Carolina for more than three years, and was transferred to civilian custody last year only after the Supreme Court considered taking up the case. Padilla's lawyers tried in vain to have him found incompetent to stand trial on grounds that he was tortured in the brig. The government said he was never mistreated.

The dirty bomb allegations that made Padilla a high–profile terror suspect in 2002 were not part of the case here. Instead, Padilla and two co–defendants of Arab descent were charged with conspiring to murder, kidnap and maim people overseas.

A prosecutor described one of Padilla's two co–defendants, Adham Hassoun, as a zealot who "indoctrinated people and converted them to become al–Qaida fighters," and the other, Kifah Jayyousi, as "the money man" who provided financing and equipment to terrorist groups overseas.

One piece of evidence entered in the trial was an application that prosecutors maintained that Padilla had filled out – in Arabic, under an alias – to attend a terrorist training camp. Another block of evidence came from tapes of the defendants' phone conversations, thousands of which were recorded by the FBI from 1993 to 2000.

Civilian MDs muzzled by DND in article's wake

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.17
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
WORD COUNT: 336

OTTAWA – Stung by the publication of a magazine article by one of its doctors that includes the graphic description of the death of a Canadian soldier in Afghanistan, the Department of National Defence has changed its contracts with civilian physicians, the Globe and Mail reports.

The department is warning them not to release sensitive information and to respect patient confidentiality.

The newspaper says the changes to contract wording were ordered on July 30, coinciding with the appearance in the U.S magazine Mother Jones of a memoir by Dr. Kevin Patterson.

The B.C. physician described the month he spent working on contract to DND at a coalition military hospital in Kandahar.

The article included several passages describing, in excruciating detail, the death on the operating table of Nova Scotia Cpl. Kevin Megeney. Family members and friends have objected to the portrayal as a breach of the doctor's responsibility to keep patient dealings confidential.

The department has launched two inquiries into the incident. Lt.–Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky, a DND spokesman on justice issues, insisted the new contract wording was not changed because of the Mother Jones controversy, but conceded they could be seen as being linked.

"This is not directly in response to the article, but it does cover some of the issues that raised concern from the article," he told the Globe.

The new contract wording deals with the need for confidentiality, not just in the case of patients but for operational security reasons as well.

According to the new contract wording, "It is critical to the safety of personnel, as well as the potential success of an operation, that sensitive information not be discussed or released outside the Department/Canadian Forces."

On the issue of patient confidentiality, the new contract language reminds doctors that they must follow the Privacy Act and rules set by provincial medical licensing authorities, noting that "personal health information will not be disclosed without the consent of the individual to whom it relates or their next of kin, as the case may be."

DND has been hiring civilian doctors to augment its own full–time physicians because of a shortage of personnel, especially trauma specialists.

Navy looks at using drones

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.17
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A3
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
WORD COUNT: 356

MONTREAL – The Canadian navy could soon be looking for a few good drones.

National Defence plans to conduct a study next year on how the country's frigates can safely launch and recover unmanned aerial vehicles – UAVs – at sea, and is asking for private companies with expertise to step forward.

"Currently, sensors are installed on the ships' masts to position them as high as possible to aid early detection of threats," said a background document accompanying the tender.

"If sensor height is a key factor to early detection, then it would be logical to locate the sensors on aerial platforms."

The army and air force have been using drones, which are controlled by technicians on the ground, for the last five years.

An entire flight of unmanned aircraft –French–made Sperwers – has been doing yeoman's service in Afghanistan since 2003 scouting the vast desert wastelands and rugged mountain passes for threats to troops on the ground. The army also employs the Skylark, a mini–UAV that resembles a model aircraft.

The tender represents the navy's first foray into the rapidly developing high–tech field, where video, infrared images and a variety of other surveillance of targets can be beamed from the air back to commanders in real time.

"UAVs give us the capacity to protect our forces," said Phil Twardawa, the acting chief scientist at the Defence Research and Development Canada lab in Valcartier, Que.

"It's a fantastic capability."

Roughly \$75,000 has been set aside for the study, which will involve laboratory computer simulations and field testing. Work is expected to begin next spring.

The country's 12 patrol frigates are equipped to carry helicopters and would require modification, depending upon the unmanned aerial vehicle chosen by the navy.

The study comes just weeks after the Conservative government announced it would proceed with a \$3.1–billion life–extending refit on the warships.

Navy sources say there is also consideration being given to fitting UAVs on to the planned Arctic patrol ships, which are not due to enter service until 2013 – or after.

Twardawa said the navy is determined to use the technology. The research lab's role will be to help weed through the various models to determine what's best suited to operate from the pitching deck of a warship in the often harsh conditions found on all three of Canada's oceans.

The research lab will also do extensive testing on the kinds of sensors and equipment that will go into a naval drone.

Newer tank offers more muscle, but still no a/c

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: World

PAGE: B8

COLUMN: Around the globe

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 135

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Britain turns focus to conflict in Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B7

COLUMN: Around the globe

SOURCE: AP

DATELINE: Kabul

WORD COUNT: 184

As its military winds down the campaign in Iraq, Britain is pouring more soldiers and aid money into Afghanistan to fight a resurgent Taliban and booming drug trade it says pose a direct threat to Britons.

Britain's ambassador in Kabul said his government began increasing its focus on Afghanistan before the end of former prime minister Tony Blair's tenure in June, and made it even more of a priority under Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Afghanistan "matters to us because a high proportion of the terrorism investigations in the U.K. can be traced back to the Afghanistan–Pakistan border area," Sir Sherard Cowper–Coles told The Associated Press.

"It matters to us because 90 per cent of the heroin on British streets comes from Afghanistan, and it matters to us because it is desperately poor, and we have a commitment through the International Development Act of tackling poverty around the world," he said.

In a July visit to the U.S., Brown called Afghanistan "the front line against terrorism," in contrast to U.S. President George W. Bush's common refrain that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror.

Canadian Navy plans to deploy unmanned aircraft on frigates

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: Canada/Atlantic

PAGE: B5

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: Montreal

WORD COUNT: 259

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Harper's message is stay the course

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: Opinion

PAGE: A7

COLUMN: National Affairs

BYLINE: James Travers

DATELINE: Ottawa

WORD COUNT: 728

Deconstructing Stephen Harper's third cabinet is much like listening to the prime minister worry out loud about his government's perilous Afghanistan exposure, internal Conservative rivalries and, of course, the next election.

Each Harper move this week touches at least one of those concerns, while together they frame a ruling party determined to be seen as still focused on its core priorities and still dreaming about a majority.

Neither rearranging a few ministers nor the prime minister's worn themes is likely to seriously challenge the conclusions of Canadians who still can't bring themselves to trust Conservatives with more power. But Harper did succeed in using mostly the same material to build a cabinet sturdier than its predecessors and mercifully unencumbered by embarrassments.

This time there are no surprise appointments of the floor-crossing Vancouver Liberal David Emerson or Montreal Senator Michael Fortier. This time no Rona Ambrose was humiliated to blur the prime minister's fingerprints on an environment policy judged hopelessly inadequate.

Rather than create new problems, the prime minister is grabbing his most troubling one by the throat. Gone from their posts are the 3Ds: the ministers responsible for defence, diplomacy and development who, along with the prime minister, let Afghanistan become the Conservatives' cross.

Almost as revealing is where Harper is concentrating his strengths. Able Jim Prentice goes to Industry at a time when a jittery economy threatens jobs and Ontario's manufacturing base. The inexperienced but now officially risen Quebec star Maxime Bernier becomes Foreign minister, the government's senior francophone and another salesman for an Afghanistan policy his province isn't buying. And, finally, the prime minister has partly put aside old grudges to bring Diane Ablonczy closer to the inner circle as an underemployed junior minister.

Still, it was only the overdue removal of Gordon O'Connor from Defence that set the prime minister's men and few women in motion. After 19 months of miscues, misinformation and sometimes wild spending, the former general and arms lobbyist now has responsibilities reduced to better match to his ability as minister of National Revenue.

O'Connor's demotion, coupled with Peter MacKay's move to Defence from Foreign Affairs, and Josée Verner's shift from the maligned federal development agency CIDA, is intended to alter the image of the polarizing Afghanistan mission.

Changing that negative public perception now depends heavily on MacKay. Having mostly held the prime minister's coat at Foreign Affairs, MacKay must now prove he's up to the demanding, if less cerebral Defence task by re-establishing clear civilian control over the military as well as the larger-than-life Rick Hillier

while ending confusion over Canada's Kandahar exit strategy.

MacKay's rugger scrum charm will appeal to the troops – many sharing his Atlantic Canada roots – and he's certain to co-exist with the top general more peacefully. But MacKay's loose grasp of the Afghanistan detainee controversy and an errant claim of sovereignty over the North Pole earlier this month are worrying omens.

Still, this shuffle has other layers. MacKay, Prentice and Bernier nurture leadership ambitions and Harper is mischievously giving each a testing new portfolio that will widen their experience and perhaps limit their futures.

More immediate than internal struggle is a federal election no more than two years away and clearly on the prime minister's mind. In resisting wholesale change Harper is minimizing risk while distancing his administration from Afghanistan's worst political dangers.

That doesn't mean policies already evolving away from combat and towards training will alter dramatically. It does confirm that the prime minister now understands that a war he needlessly made his own stands in the way of the majority he wants.

Still, not much more than that perception and a handful of cabinet portfolios changed this week. Harper's post-shuffle message was very much stay-the-course.

Clean government, law-and-order at home and a muscular military presence abroad are the prime minister's once and future priorities. Attractive as they are to core Conservative voters, they are the same priorities that led his party into opinion poll no-man's land. A relatively minor cabinet shuffle that leaves most key players in place won't provide the momentum the ruling party is missing. Nor will a summer spent canvassing the bureaucracy produce a fall bonanza of bold, galvanizing ideas.

With the notable exception of the 3Ds, it's business as usual today for a government that's hardly booming.

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

Newer tank gives Canadians more muscle in Afghanistan; Still no aircon

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.08.17

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Martin Ouellet

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: The first of 20 Leopard 2 tanks Canada has leased from Germany arrived in Kandahar Thursday morning aboard an Antonov transport aircraft. The tank operators encountered a minor technical glitch with the turrets, but military spokesman Capt. Hubert Genest says the problem can be easily repaired. The rest of the tanks will be shipped in the coming weeks. They are replacing the aging Leopard 1 tanks, which were made three decades ago and are being used in battle. – Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 430

The first of 20 newer Leopard 2 tanks for the Canadian Forces landed in Kandahar Thursday, but crews must still resort to water-filled cooling vests to cut the stifling heat inside the hulking steel beasts.

The tank, the first of 20 leased from Germany, was delivered by an Antonov transport aircraft in the early morning hours.

The Leopard 2 tanks promise more firepower, better landmine protection, longer range and better mobility than the 30-year-old Leopard 1 Canadians now use in Afghanistan.

But for all that technical superiority, the Leopard 2 still doesn't have air conditioning – a key drawback in a land where high temperatures regularly reach well into the 40C and tank crews have suffered dehydration.

To avoid wilting in the extreme heat, the four crew members – pilot, gunner, loader and crew leader – wear cooling vests to circulate chilled water over their bodies.

"I don't know if it's the best way, but I can tell you it works," said Capt. Craig Volstad of the Lord Strathcona's Horse armoured regiment based in Edmonton.

The tank rolled off the Antonov aircraft two hours late, with a mechanical problem in one of its turrets. Military spokesman Capt. Hubert Genest called it a "minor glitch that will take 15 minutes to fix."

The 19 other 62-tonne tanks leased from the German army are expected to be delivered to Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan over the next few weeks.

Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of the Canadians in southern Afghanistan, says the Leopard 2 tanks, specially modified to resist roadside bombs, will offer better protection to armoured crews.

"Right now, enemy forces have weapons that could pierce a tank and injure a soldier inside," Juneau said. "With a vehicle that offers better protection, we are improving the odds of survival of the crew."

In Kandahar province, insurgents have rarely targeted tanks with roadside bombs, the biggest threat currently facing Canadian troops. Instead, the Taliban has more frequently used improvised explosive devices against lighter armoured vehicles such as the Bison, Nyala RG-31 and the LAV3 – troop-transport vehicles that are more vulnerable to such attacks.

Lt.-Col. Stephane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team in Afghanistan, has said that the new tanks won't significantly reduce the threat to Canadian soldiers from roadside bombings.

But he said the tanks will likely make a difference in the field because they project an image of strength.

"It's another weapon in our arsenal," Lafaut said. "It could give our soldiers more confidence and be a bit of a shock for enemy troops."

Juneau says he is convinced the modern tanks will open the route to more dangerous regions of Kandahar and boost the security and confidence of troops.

Right now, enemy forces have weapons that could pierce a tank and injure a soldier inside. With a vehicle that offers better protection, we are improving the odds of survival of the crew.

Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan

Good riddance to O'Connor

IDNUMBER 200708170060
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A17
KEYWORDS: 0
BYLINE: Bryan Corbett
SOURCE: The Edmonton Journal
WORD COUNT: 73

Re: "Cabinet shuffled as Tories gird for battle over Afghanistan," The Journal, Aug. 15. Gordon O'Connor's departure from defence is the best news out of the shuffle of chairs on the Titanic. The former lobbyist for the arms industry can now go to national revenue, to raise \$20 billion for the military hardware he bought from his lobbyist friends.

Bryan Corbett, St. Albert

Navy plans to deploy unmanned aircraft on frigates; orders study

DATE: 2007.08.16

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 588

MONTREAL (CP) _ The Canadian navy could soon be looking for a few good drones.

National Defence plans to conduct a study next year on how the country's frigates can safely launch and recover unmanned aerial vehicles _ UAVs _ at sea, and is asking for private companies with expertise to step forward.

``Currently, sensors are installed on the ships' masts to position them as high as possible to aid early detection of threats," said a background document accompanying the tender.

``If sensor height is a key factor to early detection, then it would be logical to locate the sensors on aerial platforms."

The army and air force have been using drones, which are controlled by technicians on the ground, for the last five years.

An entire flight of unmanned aircraft _French-made Sperwers _ has been doing yeoman's service in Afghanistan since 2003 scouting the vast desert wastelands and rugged mountain passes for threats to troops on the ground. The army also employs the Skylark, a mini-UAV that resembles a model aircraft.

The tender represents the navy's first foray into the rapidly developing high-tech field, where video, infrared images and a variety of other surveillance of targets can be beamed from the air back to commanders in real time.

``UAVs give us the capacity to protect our forces," said Phil Twardawa, the acting chief scientist at the Defence Research and Development Canada lab in Valcartier, Que.

``It's a fantastic capability."

Roughly \$75,000 has been set aside for the study, which will involve laboratory computer simulations and field testing. Work is expected to begin next spring.

The country's 12 patrol frigates are equipped to carry helicopters and would require modification, depending upon the unmanned aerial vehicle chosen by the navy.

The study comes just weeks after the Conservative government announced it would proceed with a \$3.1-billion life-extending refit on the warships.

Navy sources say there is also consideration being given to fitting UAVs on to the planned Arctic patrol ships, which are not due to enter service until 2013 _ or after.

Twardawa said the navy is determined to utilize the technology. The research lab's role will be to help weed through the various models to determine what's best suited to operate from the pitching deck of a warship in

the often harsh conditions found on all three of Canada's oceans.

“We could just pick one now, but we would have a high percentage of loss,” he said in an interview.

“As you approach a ship at sea there are all sorts of variable conditions, including wind and sea state. We don't want it hitting any antennas or the superstructure and causing damage.”

The research lab will also do extensive testing on the kinds of sensors and equipment that will go into a naval drone.

The air force has been pushing ahead with a number of pilotless plane projects, but was recently dealt a setback.

The federal cabinet shelved a plan to purchase 12 American-built Predator drones, meant for use in Afghanistan and for surveillance during the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. Concern over the recommended sole-sourcing of the contract was the reason, defence industry sources said.

Over the long term, air force planners are looking at spending \$94 million on armed drones that can stay airborne for hours and fire precision munitions.

The navy's decision to jump on the UAV bandwagon could prove to be good news for Quebec-based Bombardier, which has developed a rotary-wing drone, the CL-327, known as the Guardian. Its compact design allows for it to take off and land vertically, which is important for shipboard operations.

The US Navy has tested the system, but at last report had not committed to buying any.

In the 1970s and 1980s Canada was a leader in the development of UAVs. Canadair, which later became Bombardier, in partnership with French and German companies laid the groundwork for much of the technical advancement seen today.

It developed a rail-launched, rocket-driven drone, the C-289, which was sold to Germany, France and Italy. But defence cuts in the early 1990s saw Canada take a pass on its own technology.

Taliban to resume talks with South Korean officials bout hostages

DATE: 2007.08.16

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 292

GHAZNI, Afghanistan (AP) _ The Taliban says it will hold a new round of face-to-face talks with South Korean officials to discuss 19 church volunteers still held by the group in Afghanistan.

Qari Yousef Ahmadi, who claims to speak for the Taliban, says the militants will demand the release of eight Taliban prisoners held by Afghan authorities before any of the remaining South Korean hostages can be freed.

That demand has so far been rejected by Afghan authorities.

Three South Korean delegates have arrived at the office of the Afghan Red Crescent, where previous negotiations with the Taliban have been held.

Franz Rauchenstein, an official with the International Committee of the Red Cross, says Red Cross officials are also on hand to facilitate the talks.

The plan for the new round of face-to-face talks comes after the release Monday of two women who were among the 23 South Koreans kidnapped by the militants July 19 as they were travelling by bus from Kabul to the former Taliban stronghold Kandahar.

The kidnappers have killed two male hostages and 14 women and five men are still being held.

Two militant representatives held two rounds of face-to-face talks with South Korean officials last Friday and Saturday at the Red Crescent office, after the Afghan government agreed to guarantee the safety of the militant delegation.

The Taliban want South Korean officials to put pressure on the Afghan government to free the imprisoned militants and will not harm the rest of the hostages while the talks are going on, Ahmadi said.

The Afghan government was heavily criticized in March for freeing five Taliban prisoners to win the release of an Italian journalist and have ruled out any further such deals, saying they would encourage more kidnappings.

Ahmadi said the release of the two women was a show of goodwill. South Korean officials have called for the unconditional release of the rest of the hostages, while also calling on Afghan authorities to show flexibility.

DND muzzles civilian MDs after published account of soldier's death

DATE: 2007.08.16
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE HEALTH
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 359

OTTAWA (CP) _ Stung by the publication of a magazine article by one of its doctors that includes the graphic description of the death of a Canadian soldier in Afghanistan, the Department of National Defence has changed its contracts with civilian physicians, the Globe and Mail reports.

The department is warning them not to release sensitive information and to respect patient confidentiality.

The newspaper says the changes to contract wording were ordered on July 30, coinciding with the appearance in the U.S magazine ``Mother Jones" of a memoir by Dr. Kevin Patterson.

The B.C. physician described the month he spent working on contract to DND at a coalition military hospital in Kandahar.

The article included several passages describing, in excruciating detail, the death on the operating table of Nova Scotia Cpl. Kevin Megeney. Family members and friends have objected to the portrayal as a breach of the doctor's responsibility to keep patient dealings confidential.

The department has launched two inquiries into the incident. Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky, a DND spokesman on justice issues, insisted the new contract wording was not changed because of the Mother Jones controversy, but conceded they could be seen as being linked.

``This is not directly in response to the article, but it does cover some of the issues that raised concern from the article," he told the Globe.

The new contract wording deals with the need for confidentiality, not just in the case of patients but for operational security reasons as well.

A fellow Canadian doctor said he was surprised by the detailed description of the Kandahar base included in the Mother Jones account.

According to the new contract wording, ``It is critical to the safety of personnel, as well as the potential success of an operation, that sensitive information not be discussed or released outside the Department/Canadian Forces."

On the issue of patient confidentiality, the new contract language reminds doctors that they must follow the Privacy Act and rules set by provincial medical licensing authorities, noting that ``personal health information will not be disclosed without the consent of the individual to whom it relates or their next of kin, as the case may be."

DND has been hiring civilian doctors to augment its own full-time physicians because of a shortage of personnel, especially trauma specialists.

(Globe and Mail)

B.C. bike tour aims to raise money for 200,000 bibles for Canadian soldiers

DATE: 2007.08.16

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE SOCIAL RELIGION

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 109

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. (CP) _ A group of cyclists will peddle for 970 kilometres in B.C. as part of a fundraising effort to send 200,000 bibles to Canadian soldiers.

On Wednesday, participants of the Bike For Bibles Tour converged on Prince George, one of their stops before they loop back to 100 Mile House, where they started on Sunday.

Doug Woods, president of the B.C. chapter of the Canadian Bible Society, says the tour is aiming to raise about \$70,000.

The money will be used for specially designed camouflaged bibles for troops in Afghanistan and those stationed in Canada.

The 36 bicyclists and 11 roadies range in age from 19 to their mid-60s and are from B.C., Alberta, Ontario and the United States.

Woods says the bibles have already gone to the printer. (Prince George Citizen)

Padilla convicted of helping extremists as part of a North American network

DATE: 2007.08.16

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 622

MIAMI (AP—CP) _ Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen held for 3{ years as an enemy combatant, was convicted Thursday of helping Islamic extremists and plotting overseas attacks in a case that came to symbolize the Bush administration's zeal to clamp down on terrorism.

Padilla and two foreign-born co-defendants were accused of being part of a North American support cell that provided supplies, money and recruits to groups of Islamic extremists.

“The network operated from many cities throughout the United States and in Canada,” Craig Morford, acting deputy attorney general, told a Washington news conference.

The convictions hardly constituted a complete victory for the U.S. government.

When Padilla was arrested in the months following the 2001 terrorist attacks, authorities touted him as a key al-Qaida operative who planned to detonate a radioactive “dirty bomb” in a U.S. city. That allegation never made it to court.

Instead, after a three-month trial and only 1{ days of deliberations, the 36-year-old Padilla and his co-defendants were convicted of conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim people and two counts of providing material support to terrorists.

Padilla showed no emotion and stared straight ahead as he heard the verdict that could bring him a life prison sentence. One person in the family section started to sob.

The defence contended they were trying to help persecuted Muslims in war zones with relief and humanitarian aid.

The White House thanked the jury for a “just” verdict.

“We commend the jury for its work in this trial and thank it for upholding a core American principle of impartial justice for all,” said Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council at the White House. “Jose Padilla received a fair trial and a just verdict.”

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales called the verdict “a significant victory in our efforts to fight the threat posed by terrorists and their supporters.”

Estela Lebron, Padilla's mother, said outside the courthouse: “The winner is George Bush.” Earlier in the courtroom, she said she felt “a little bit sad” at the verdict but expected her son's lawyers would appeal.

“I don't know how they found Jose guilty. There was no evidence he was speaking in code,” she said, referring to FBI wiretap intercepts in which Padilla was overheard talking to co-defendant Adham Amin Hassoun.

U.S. District Judge Marcia Cooke set sentencing for Dec. 5.

Neal Sonnett, a prominent Miami defence lawyer who heads an American Bar Association task force on treatment of enemy combatants, said the verdict proves that the U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is unnecessary to deal with terrorism suspects.

Canadian Omar Khadr, charged with murder, has been held at the prison camp for almost five years. A military judge delayed his case again in June on a legal technicality.

“This verdict once again demonstrates that federal courts are perfectly capable of handling terrorism cases,” Sonnett said.

U.S. officials said Padilla, while incarcerated in a military brig in South Carolina, admitted exploring the dirty bomb plot. But that evidence could not be used at trial because he was not read his rights and did not immediately have access to a lawyer.

Padilla's lawyers fought for years to get his case into federal court, and he was finally added to the Miami terrorism support indictment in late 2005 just as the U.S. Supreme Court was poised to consider President George W. Bush's authority to continue detaining him.

They claimed that he was routinely subjected to harsh treatment and torture, including being forced to stand in painful stress positions, given LSD or other drugs as “truth serum,” and subjected to loud noises and noxious odours.

To support their claims, his lawyers released brig photographs of Padilla in chains and wearing blacked-out goggles and noise-reducing ear coverings.

Padilla, a Muslim convert from Chicago, had lived in South Florida in the 1990s and was supposedly recruited by Hassoun at a mosque to become a mujahedeen fighter.

The key piece of physical evidence was a five-page form Padilla supposedly filled out in July 2000 to attend an al-Qaida training camp in Afghanistan, which would link the other two defendants as well to Osama bin Laden's terrorist organization.

With Iraq pullout underway, Britain turns focus to conflict in Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.08.16

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 872

KABUL (AP) _ As its military winds down the campaign in Iraq, Britain is pouring more soldiers and aid money into Afghanistan to fight a resurgent Taliban and booming drug trade it says pose a direct threat to Britons.

Britain's ambassador in Kabul said the British government began increasing its focus on Afghanistan shortly before the end of former prime minister Tony Blair's tenure in June, and made it even more of a priority under Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Afghanistan ``matters to us because a high proportion of the terrorism investigations in the U.K. can be traced back to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area," Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles told The Associated Press in an interview this week.

``It matters to us because 90 per cent of the heroin on British streets comes from Afghanistan, and it matters to us because it is desperately poor, and we have a commitment through the International Development Act of tackling poverty around the world," he said.

During a visit to the United States late last month, Brown called Afghanistan ``the front line against terrorism," in contrast to U.S. President George W. Bush's common refrain that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror.

Britain will increase its troop strength in Afghanistan to 7,700 by the year's end, up from 7,000 today and 3,600 a year ago, in what Cowper-Coles labelled a ``sensible tactical adjustment" based on commanders' advice.

British troops are responsible for Helmand province in southern Afghanistan _ scene of some of the heaviest fighting over the last two years and the largest opium poppy-growing region in the world.

Canada has about 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, mostly in adjacent Kandahar province.

In Iraq, Britain has handed over two of its three bases in Basra to the Iraqi government, and in the coming weeks its force level will drop to 5,000, down from 40,000 after the March 2003 invasion.

``I think there is a general feeling in the United Kingdom concerning Iraq, as far as the U.K.'s efforts are concerned, that there is not much more than can be done with military force, so we can logically shift more focus to Afghanistan," said Christopher Langton, a former British colonel who is an analyst at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Britain's move to Afghanistan, where the United States has 25,000 soldiers, ``is proof that we're not leaving the United States in the lurch, and although I'm quite sure they'd rather we stay in Iraq they also know we don't have endless resources," Langton said.

David Miliband, Britain's new foreign secretary, chose Afghanistan as his first overseas trip.

With Iraq pullout underway, Britain turns focus to conflict in Afghanistan

Afterward, he wrote in the British magazine The Spectator that ``most British terrorism investigations trace back to the training camps just across the border, in western Pakistan."

Police said two of the suspects in the London subway and bus bombings on July 7, 2005, had attended training camps in Pakistan, as did the ringleader of failed attacks two weeks later.

``There's a real concern among ministers that, first of all, Afghanistan is one of our top foreign policy priorities and secondly that we need to get it right," Cowper-Coles said.

Cowper-Coles said NATO's International Security Assistance Force, including British troops, will ``really raise its game on counternarcotics" next growing season.

``You're going to see increased disruption of traffickers. You're going to see some serious targeted, non-negotiated eradication (of poppy fields)," he said. ``In short the big traffickers are going to start feeling the heat."

Heroin accounted for nearly a third of the total number of drug-related deaths in Britain in 2005, the last year for which statistics are available, according to the government.

Drugscope, a British drug information charity, says heroin use has levelled off, however, in part because that segment of the population is aging and fewer young people are taking up the drug. The charity estimates heroin had a street value of US\$100 per gram in Britain in 2005.

On the aid front, Britain's Department for International Development will spend more than \$200 million in Afghanistan this year _ one of Britain's top aid commitments per capita anywhere in the world.

``We very much believe that there is no military solution. Equally there is no entirely nonmilitary solution," Cowper-Coles said. ``We've got to keep up the military pressure on the Taliban, but at the same time we've got to use the other strands in our strategy to try to contain and gradually bring down the insurgency."

Cowper-Coles said Britain doesn't have any significant policy differences in Afghanistan with the United States, although Britain does not back Washington's interest in launching a Colombia-style aerial spraying campaign to eradicate opium poppies.

``There are occasionally differences of emphasis," he said.

``We're both agreed that there's no case for aerial spraying unless the government of Afghanistan agrees to it. And as I understand it, the government of Afghanistan does not favour spraying, so there may be an academic debate about it, but it's just that _ academic."

On the military front, a report in the New York Times last week quoted an unidentified British military officer as saying he had asked U.S. special forces to leave his area of operations because they were causing civilian deaths.

Cowper-Coles said there was ``no truth to the suggestion" that anyone asked the U.S. forces to leave the officer's area, but added, ``as in any war ... when troops are fighting alongside each other, there are occasional tensions below the surface, and somebody under pressure spouts off."

``But overall my impression from Helmand is that U.S. and U.K. forces are working extremely well together," he said.

First of 20 leased German Leopard 2 tanks arrive in Kandahar

DATE: 2007.08.16

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 170

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – The first of 20 Leopard 2 tanks Canada has leased from Germany arrived in Kandahar this morning aboard an Antonov transport aircraft.

The tank operators encountered a minor technical glitch with the turrets, but military spokesman Capt. Hubert Genest says the problem can be repaired easily.

The rest of the tanks will be shipped in the coming weeks. They are replacing the aging Leopard 1 tanks, which were made three decades ago and are currently being used in battle.

Col. Christian Juneau, the deputy–commander of Canadians in southern Afghanistan, says the new tanks will increase security because of their superior firing capability and protection from landmines.

But Lt.–Col. Stephane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team in Afghanistan, says the new tanks won't give Canadian soldiers much more protection from roadside bombings.

He says insurgents tend to target less robust vehicles, like Canada's LAV3, Nyala and Bison armoured vehicles. Still, he says the tanks will likely make a `difference' in the field because they project an image of strength.

(BN)

BC–Padilla–Terror Charges–Update (details)

DATE: 2007.08.16

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 148

MIAMI _ After being held for three and a-half years as an enemy combatant, Jose Padilla now faces life in prison after being convicted on all charges at a federal trial in Miami.

Padilla and his two co-defendants were convicted of conspiring to murder, kidnap and maim people overseas. They were also convicted of two counts of providing material support for terrorism.

All three had been accused of being part of a North American support cell that gave money, supplies and recruits to groups of Islamic extremists overseas.

Padilla is a U–S citizen who was once accused of being part of an al–Qaida plot to set off a radioactive "dirty bomb" in the U.S. But those allegations weren't a part of this trial.

His attorneys fought for years to get the case into federal court, as Padilla was held in military custody.

The key piece of physical evidence was a five–page form that Padilla had supposedly filled out in July of 2000 to attend an al–Qaida training camp in Afghanistan.

Sentencing is set for December 5th.

INDEX:International, Defence

DATE: 2007.08.16
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 96

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – A stronger and better tank has arrived in Kandahar for Canadian troops — but there's still one problem.

The Leopard 2 tank still doesn't have air conditioning.

It's a key drawback in a land where temperatures reach well past 40 degrees Celsius and tank crews have suffered dehydration.

So crews still have to resort to water-filled cooling vests to cut the stifling heat inside the hulking steel beasts.

The tank is the first of 20 leased from Germany.

The tanks promise more firepower, better landmine protection, longer range and better mobility than the 30-year-old Leopard 1 Canadians now use in Afghanistan.

The rest of the tanks will be shipped in the coming weeks.

They are replacing the aging Leopard 1 tanks, which were made three decades ago and are currently being used in battle.

(BN)

alj

INDEX:Defence, International, Politics

DATE: 2007.08.16
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 141

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – A new round of face-to-face talks have begun between South Korean officials and the Taliban on the fate of 19 captive church volunteers.

Three South Korean delegates arrived this morning at the office of the Afghan Red Crescent, where previous negotiations with the Taliban have been held.

A Taliban delegation arrived late in the afternoon, several hours after the talks were scheduled to start.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi says his group is still demanding the release of eight Taliban prisoners held by Afghan authorities before any of the remaining South Korean hostages can be freed. That demand has so far been rejected by the Afghan government.

The fresh talks come after the release Monday of two women among 23 South Koreans kidnapped by the insurgents on July 19 on the road from Kabul to Kandahar.

The kidnappers have killed two male hostages. Fourteen women and five men are still being held.

(AP)

Bibles-For-Soldiers

DATE: 2007.08.16
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE SOCIAL RELIGION
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 113

PRINCE GEORGE, B-C -- A group of cyclists is peddling through B-C as part of a fundraising effort to send 200 thousand Bibles to Canadian soldiers.

Participants converged on Prince George yesterday, one of the stops before they loop back to 100 Mile House, where they started on Sunday.

Doug Woods, president of the B-C chapter of the Canadian Bible Society, says the tour is aiming to raise about 70 thousand dollars.

The money will be used for specially designed camouflaged Bibles for troops in Afghanistan and those stationed in Canada.

The 36 bicyclists and 11 roadies taking part in the Bike for Bibles Tour range in age from 19 to their mid-60;s and are from B-C, Alberta, Ontario and the United States.

Woods says the Bibles have already gone to the printer.

(Prince George Citizen)

mcw

U.S. won't budge on Khadr; Ahead of next week's talks by Bush, Harper, Calderon, White House signals Canadian to face tribunal at Guantanamo

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ILLUSTRATION: Christinne Muschi for the Toronto Star Security will be tight at Chateau Montebello in Quebec next week when Prime Minister Stephen Harper meets the U.S. and Mexican leaders. ;

BYLINE: Tim Harper

SOURCE: Toronto Star

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WORD COUNT: 544

The White House signalled yesterday it is adamant that Canadian terror suspect Omar Khadr face justice at Guantanamo Bay, where he remains the only Westerner being held at the U.S. military prison in Cuba.

By reiterating that the military court process will play out in the case of the 20-year-old Toronto man, the Bush administration was launching a pre-emptive strike in advance of next week's meeting of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Felipe Calderon in Quebec.

"We ultimately want to have all of the cases at Guantanamo Bay adjudicated and people dealt with in a just and fair manner," said White House spokesperson Gordon Johndroe.

Harper now stands virtually alone among U.S. allies in not condemning or even criticizing the Guantanamo prison camp, which even the administration here concedes has become a stain on America's reputation worldwide.

Last week, the Canadian Bar Association wrote Harper urging him to intervene to assist Khadr, who was captured in 2002 at the age of 15 in Afghanistan, and accused of killing a U.S. soldier.

He has yet to have his case heard in court – the Pentagon is currently appealing after charges against Khadr were dismissed by a U.S. military judge in June.

Australia and Britain have intervened with Washington to repatriate their nationals being held at Guantanamo.

Johndroe said he expects Bush and Harper, at a private meeting Monday, will discuss the war in Afghanistan, developments in the Middle East and tougher U.S. border requirements set to take effect next summer. The two men may also discuss Russia's recent claim to the Arctic.

Johndroe said Bush and Harper have had ongoing talks about U.S. rules that require Canadians to carry passports or equivalent security documents by next summer, only months before a new president moves into the Oval Office.

"At the end of the day, we want secure borders and we don't want people to take advantage of Canadian laws or American laws or Mexican laws ... to do us harm," he said.

"It would serve no one's interests if there was an attack in any of our three countries."

The last time Bush came to Canada, he was able to joke about some of the one-finger salutes his motorcade received.

He was newly re-elected and carried with him truckloads of self-declared "political capital."

The contrast with Bush's visit next week is stark.

That political capital has long been exhausted and he has been consigned to lame duck status on domestic issues with 17 months left in his presidency.

This is the third summit of the so-called Security and Prosperity Partnership launched by Bush at a 2005 Texas summit with then Mexican president Vicente Fox and prime minister Paul Martin.

"The significance of the meeting is the fact that it is occurring," said Robert Pastor of Washington's American University, a leading voice for closer continental ties.

"In essence, all three are running minority governments so there is little to expect in the way of progress."

Pastor said he thought the continental co-operation initiatives were "somewhere between stalled and moving glacially.

"The Arctic is warming faster than progress is being made on this agenda," he said.

But Johndroe said he didn't accept arguments that the initiative had stalled.

"I'm less concerned about what you call an event and much more pleased to point out what the three countries have accomplished together," he said.

The process has been shrouded in secrecy and activists on both side of the border have raised concerns about an erosion of sovereignty of their respective countries.

Judicial Watch, a conservative foundation which promotes transparency in government, yesterday lost its court bid to sit in the meeting of the North American Competitiveness Council, the blue-ribbon business panel advising the leaders.

Tom Fitton, the president of the foundation, said he would continue to pursue, through the courts, the release of all documents from the council.

"You just can't have these designated groups having secret meetings about public policy," he said. "We have to open up the system."

Ottawa vows to open up about the Afghan mission; Officials plan to offer regular media updates, seen as a way to explain, boost support for the operation

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The federal government will begin regular briefings on its Afghan mission in a bid to boost public awareness not only about the work of the military but also on development efforts in the troubled country.

The first media briefing will be held Sept. 4 in Ottawa and the sessions will be conducted every three weeks after that, a source told the Star.

There's been a push for more regular updates about Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Just recently, the Conference of Defence Associations, an Ottawa lobby group, publicly called on the government to put high-ranking officials "in front of the camera" to better explain the mission and progress made so far.

Yesterday, in a significant move, senior government officials agreed and put a plan into motion for those regular briefings to take place.

"The whole goal is to provide information. It's important to get out," the source said.

The media briefings will include senior officials from agencies involved in the mission, including the defence department, foreign affairs, the Canadian International Development Agency and even the RCMP, which has its own police officers doing mentoring work in Kandahar.

The first briefing, in just over two weeks, will also feature Canada's ambassador in Afghanistan, Arif Lalani, who is expected to call in from Kabul.

Since the Conservative government came to power in February 2006, there have just been three briefings in Ottawa in which representatives from all departments were available to answer questions about the broad scope of the Canadian mission in Kandahar.

And sources say it took high-level arm twisting to convince officials to go along with this plan for regular briefings and blamed in-fighting between the departments for the failure to hold regular briefings until now.

The move comes just days after Prime Minister Stephen Harper shook up the government's focus on Afghanistan with a cabinet shuffle that shifted Peter MacKay to defence and Maxime Bernier to foreign

affairs.

The move was clearly seen as an attempt to better sell Ottawa's Afghan message at a time when Canadians are deeply divided on the mission and the future of Canada's military presence in the country is coming up for debate.

Taliban ties worried U.S.

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BYLINE: Rohan Sullivan
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Newly declassified intelligence documents reveal the depth of U.S. officials' concern that Pakistan was providing funds, arms – and even combat troops – to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan for years before the Sept. 11 attacks.

They also show rising frustration at what U.S. officials called Pakistan's "resistance and/or duplicity" toward Washington's repeated requests for help in getting the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden. A top official at one point said hauling Pakistan before the UN Security Council should be considered.

The documents, released under a Freedom of Information Act request by George Washington University's National Security Archive and posted on its website, add detail to what was known about U.S. intelligence on Pakistan's links with the Taliban as it surged to power in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s.

Cables and letters – most stamped "confidential" – lay out concerns in language stripped of diplomatic niceties. All but one of the 35 documents deal with the period between December 1994 and September 2000. Many sensitive details, including what appear to be names, have been blacked out.

They show U.S. officials as early as 1994 believed Pakistan's intelligence services were deeply involved with the Taliban and its takeover of the southern Afghan city of Kandahar. The then-obscure religious militia went on to capture the capital, Kabul, in September 1996, gaining control of almost all of Afghanistan by mid-1997.

Responding to the new documents, foreign ministry spokesperson Tasnim Aslam reiterated Pakistan's denials it ever gave military support to the Taliban and denied Pakistan ignored U.S. requests to use its influence to persuade the Taliban to surrender bin Laden.

In 1996, U.S. intelligence officials concluded Pakistan's Interservice Intelligence was more involved with the Taliban than Pakistani officials had been telling U.S. diplomats. An Oct. 22 cable told Washington it was supplying food and fuel to the Taliban and "munitions convoys depart Pakistan late in the evening hours and are concealed to reveal their true contents."

Two weeks later, another cable said large numbers of Pakistan's Frontier Corps were being "utilized in command and control; training; and when necessary – combat" in Afghanistan. Frontier Corps were mostly ethnic Pashtuns, who wouldn't stand out among the Taliban, mostly Pashtuns.

Aslam denied the cable's claims. "That's absolutely baseless. Our troops have never been involved inside Afghanistan," she said.

U.S. citizen convicted for aiding extremists

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ILLUSTRATION: Jose Padilla, 36, was held for 31 2 years as an "an enemycombatant." J. Pat Carter AP Estela Lebron, the mother of Jose Padilla, leaves a Miami court yesterday after her son and two other men were convicted on terrorism charges. J. Pat Carter AP Estela Lebron, the mother of Jose Padilla, leaves a Miami court yesterday after her son and two other men were convicted on terrorism charges. ;
BYLINE: Tim Harper
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 509

Jose Padilla, the former Chicago street gang member once accused of plotting to detonate a radioactive "dirty bomb" in the United States, was convicted of a series of lesser terrorism charges yesterday.

The conviction was a much-needed victory for the Bush administration in its war on terror, but the charges finally brought against Padilla were a shadow of the sensational allegations made against him by then-U.S. attorney general John Ashcroft in 2002.

A Miami jury took only 11/2 days to convict Padilla, 36, and his foreign-born co-defendants, Adham Amin Hassoun and Kifah Wael Jayyousi, on charges of conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim people overseas, which carry a penalty of life in prison.

All three were also convicted of two terrorism material support counts, which carry potential 15-year sentences each.

The White House hailed the decision. "We commend the jury for its work in this trial and thank it for upholding a core American principle of impartial justice for all," said Gordon Johndroe, a White House spokesperson.

"Jose Padilla received a fair trial and a just verdict."

Padilla, a Muslim convert, had lived in South Florida in the 1990s and was supposedly recruited by Hassoun at a mosque to become a mujahideen fighter.

Padilla was arrested in Chicago in May 2002 on his return from a trip to the Middle East, and officials said he was suspected of involvement in an Al Qaeda plot to detonate a "dirty bomb" in the United States.

He quickly became a symbol of domestic terrorism in this country and was used by the Bush administration to back its claim the country was safer in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist strike.

Padilla faced no charges in relation to those attacks.

He was designated an "enemy combatant" by U.S. President George W. Bush and he languished 3 1/2 years in a navy brig in South Carolina.

He was interrogated about the plot without a lawyer present, transferred to Miami, and added to an existing terrorism indictment just as the U.S. Supreme Court was to rule on the Bush administration's right to continue to hold an American citizen as "an enemy combatant."

Padilla's mother, Estela Lebron, told reporters outside the Miami courthouse that she could not understand the guilty verdict and expected an appeal.

"Of course we're going to appeal," she said. "You need to understand, this is a Republican city. I'm not surprised of anything in this place any more."

In Washington, U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales called the jury verdict a "significant victory" in the Bush war on terrorism.

"As this trial demonstrated, we will use our authority as prosecutors to dismantle terrorist networks and those who support them in the United States and abroad."

Other legal experts, however, believe this case will ultimately be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court because the Bush decision to hold an American citizen in U.S. military custody without charge could colour the decision of an appeals court.

The key piece of physical evidence against Padilla was an Al Qaeda training camp application form that prosecutors said he filled out in 2000. The form, recovered by the CIA in Afghanistan, contains seven of Padilla's fingerprints and other personal identifiers, such as his birthdate and his ability to speak Spanish, English and Arabic.

Investigators collected some 300,000 wiretap intercepts from 1993 to 2001, mainly involving Padilla's co-defendants Hassoun and Jayyousi and others.

Most of the conversations were in Arabic and purportedly used code such as "tourism" and "football" for violent jihad.

Khadr not the naive whelp depicted

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BYLINE: Rosie DiManno
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When Omar Khadr purportedly tossed the grenade that killed an American infantryman, he was neither child nor soldier.

At 15, he was age-appropriate for marriage in Afghan culture and old enough to enter military service. But while it could be argued that the just-deposed Taliban regime still retained legitimate status as an armed force fighting the U.S.-led invasion, Khadr and his Al Qaeda-affiliated father weren't part of that combat structure.

They menaced under no internationally recognized definition of soldiering. Under Geneva Conventions, captured fighters are considered prisoners of war if they are members of an adversary state's armed forces or part of an identifiable militia group that abides by the laws of war.

By no stretch of imagination could that definition be extended to Al Qaeda, a purely terrorist entity that lacks even the moral cover of a broadly supported national insurgency.

Khadr, the lone Canadian and youngest enemy combatant still held at Guantanamo, is routinely presented by his advocates as a naive whelp blown about by the winds of war, putatively innocent of any actionable crime and left to rot at an offshore detention facility, denied basic legal rights.

Yet Guantanamo, like it or loathe it, is a creation of the U.S. Congress, its status legislatively secure if unsavoury to many, even as numerous judicial challenges wind through American courts.

A few years back, I visited a repatriation camp for child soldiers in Uganda, youngsters who had been abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army and, in many instances, forced to murder their parents so they would never be accepted back into their villages. Some had found their own way, through the bush, to the camp. Others had been fetched by Ugandan troops. They were as young as 7 the girls repeatedly raped to further ostracizing. A small band of committed counsellors were struggling to reclaim their minds and bodies.

Those were child soldiers and all their sins must be forgiven.

Khadr may have been brainwashed by a wicked father but he's recanted none of it and has fired the American military lawyers who worked tirelessly on his case.

Still, Khadr can barely pass wind without his civil lawyers relaying the event to accommodating media.

The cause celebre of Omar Khadr – distinguishing him from the more than 2, 500 other Canadians being held in foreign jails, many in countries where justice is an alien concept – has been effectively afoot, stories

regularly illustrated by that single photograph of Khadr as a teen, though he no longer remotely resembles that youth.

Artist sketches from the defendant's last appearance in court show a hulking and bearded adult but optics are more usefully massaged with the old picture.

The Canadian Bar Association recently threw its heft into the controversy by "demanding" Ottawa vigorously pursue Khadr's release into Canadian custody, similar to arrangements made by Australia and Britain for their Guantanamo nationals. None of those detainees had been charged with murder, a fact of apparent insignificance to Khadr's apologists.

Extradition might be a decent denouement – if not for promulgation in Canada of the view that Khadr, with five years behind bars, has already spent enough time imprisoned. Five years for murder is apparently sufficient for someone 15 at the time.

Yet Lee Malvo Johnson, the teenage Beltway Sniper who really was moulded to murder, received a life sentence.

And, in Mississauga, the Bathtub Murder sisters – 15 and 17 when they drowned mom – got 10 years, six to be served in custody, the maximum youth sentence.

Guess it matters less when the victim is a soldier.

We have 2,500 of those in Afghanistan. Tell me any of their lives are worth just five years.

Rosie DiManno usually appears Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Bring back the special relationship; Allan Gotlieb; As North America's Leaders Prepare To Meet On Monday, A Former Canadian Ambassador To Washington Lays Out A Plan For Revolutionizing Our Ties With The United States

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ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: / Prime minister Mackenzie King meets with U.S. president Harry S Truman in Washington on Oct. 28, 1946. ;

SOURCE: National Post

WORD COUNT: 1997

With the leaders of Canada, the United States and Mexico set to gather in Montebello, Que., to try to make progress on a "trilateral framework" for North America, now is an appropriate time to remember how much Canada's relationship with the United States has changed in recent years.

The history of our relations in the post-Second World War era can be divided into several broad periods. The first was the Mackenzie King-St. Laurent era of Canada-U.S. continentalism and the special relationship; the second was Trudeau's attempted diversification away from continentalism and his rejection of the special relationship; the third was the Mulroney period of constructing a more rules-based and institutionalized framework.

We are now in the contemporary or fourth era, which might possibly be described as the era of trilateralism. It could also be called a decade-and-a-half of drift.

During the "golden period" following the Second World War, our economic relations shifted overwhelmingly to the United States from Britain, and our North American defence relationship deepened. We and the Americans looked at the world in a similar fashion, and worked together to build international organizations and resist threats to peace. Canada made huge defence expenditures — as high as 40% of the federal budget at one point (compared to less than 10% today).

We managed the relationship bilaterally, but with surprisingly few institutions. There was a short-lived attempt at utilizing joint Cabinet committees; but by and large, issues in the world's largest two-way economic relationship were dealt with by ad hoc methods mandated by the president. The period of the special relationship corresponded closely with the period of the Imperial Presidency: Congress was distinctly subordinate to the executive.

Such ad hocery could not have worked without the belief that there was something special about our relationship. There was an open border, strong cultural affinities and shared values. This does not mean that the post-war era was without significant conflicts. But on a number of occasions, the U.S. subordinated its economic interests to the larger purpose of good relations with Canada. For example, Canadian oil imports

into the United States were granted an overland exemption from restrictions on oil imports then in place. And when countervail issues arose as a result of duty–remission schemes, the United States proposed that we consider an automotive agreement for tariff–free trade in autos. The Auto Pact was born. In 1971, when the Nixon Administration imposed a surcharge on all imports (the famous "Nixon Shokku") Canadian protests were heard and the surcharge for Canadian imports was lifted.

But there were forces at work in subsequent years that brought about a deep change in the relationship. In Canada, there was widespread disillusionment about the U.S. war in Vietnam and U.S. leadership. In the United States, there was growing anxiety about a perceived decline in its economy primacy. In the Nixon–Kissinger era of detente, there was also a sense that the threats of the Cold War were receding and the need for alliance solidarity diminishing.

In its celebrated or notorious (depending on your point of view) "Third Option," the Trudeau government advocated that Canada reduce its dependency on the United States by diversifying our trade, directing it more toward Europe and the new financial superpower Japan. Trudeau also proposed that Canada strengthen the domestic instruments of our national economy through greater ownership and control of our natural resources — such as with the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) and, later, the National Energy Program (NEP).

Accordingly, during the Trudeau years, the notion of a "special relationship" was deemed inappropriate and fell from favour.

In their timing, these moves were highly unfortunate. Trudeau failed to take account of profound changes underway in the United States — specifically, the revolution in governance in Washington that followed in the wake of the Vietnam War and Watergate. Ironically, Ottawa deemed that special consideration for our interests was no longer necessary at the moment when we would need it most — when the presidency had been diminished, and Congress was asserting its jurisdictional primacy in external trade.

As the presidency weakened, so did party discipline. Decision–making in Congress became atomized as protectionism cast its shadow over the Hill. New trade laws gave U.S. regulatory bodies far–reaching powers to investigate and retaliate against discrimination targeting U.S. goods and services. Almost nothing that grew or was dug from under the ground or moved in the sea escaped attack. FIRA and the NEP gave rise to an outbreak of retaliatory threats. Prominent senators trumpeted to the world that the era was over when the U.S. would subordinate its economic interests to its geopolitical goals. And Canada was vulnerable: There was no longer any special relationship to offer political safe harbour from protectionist storms.

Meanwhile, Trudeau's trade diversification campaign was a failure. During the decade following the launching of the Third Option to when Trudeau took his walk in the snow, our exports to the United States mushroomed from some 60% of our total exports to around 80%.

Brian Mulroney's government ushered in the third era. His proposal for free trade with the U.S. introduced the first innovative proposals in the architecture of our relationship in a half–century. It proposed a more secure rules–based legal regime to support the massive flows of trade and economic activity between our two countries.

Mulroney rejected the notion of the "ordinariness" of the Canada–U.S. relationship. Because the Free Trade Agreement granted mutual preferential status, it re–embraced the notion that Canada and the U.S. enjoyed a special relationship, and it built on that fact.

However, as was recognized at the time, the Free Trade Agreement fell short of what was needed. There were no agreed rules on what constitutes a "subsidy," there were weaknesses in dispute–settlement; much work needed to be done in areas such as agriculture, procurement and forest products. In subsequent years, for a

Bring back the special relationship; Allan Gotlieb; As North America's Leaders Prepare To Meet 062Monday

number of reasons, a needed agreement on rules for deeper integration — a so-called "NAFTA-plus" — never materialized.

The Canada–U.S. Free Trade Agreement soon evolved into a trilateral accord, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), in which Mexico shares a privileged market-access position into the United States. There probably would not have been a NAFTA without the Canada–U.S. treaty providing the framework on which it could be constructed. But in the process, Canada lost its unique status, and Washington became more engaged with the unique problems and challenges in the Mexican–U.S. relationship.

In trilateralizing the process, Canada lost momentum. The complementary nature of our two economies and deep industrial integration could have facilitated reaching a deeper and wider agreement between our two nations. In turn, it might have once again provided the template for third countries. We did not seize that opportunity.

The agreement did not contain within it a prescribed process that would lead to its own improvement. The history of the European Union demonstrates the role of such internal institutions in spurring the process of deeper integration.

The Liberal prime ministers who succeeded Mulroney, Jean Chretien and Paul Martin, did not seek to build upon the reinvigorated special relationship forged in the previous decade. Differentiation and distance resumed their preferred place in Canadian foreign policy. Canadian leaders came to over rely on lobbying the U.S. Congress and exercises in public relations to further their trade interests.

The consequences for Canada would not have been so serious had the events of Sept. 11, 2001 not taken place. An era was born in which defence of the homeland trumped all other concerns. Major new obstacles began to impede cross-border movement. The Canada–U.S. border began to thicken.

The Chretien government struggled to address the issues through "smart-border" negotiations. This effort evolved into the trilateral process launched in Waco, Tex., in 2005, the Security and Prosperity Partnership, through which the three North American states sought to address regulatory and security obstacles standing in the way of deepening economic relations.

The process, opaque and bureaucratic, has lacked the leadership necessary to achieve results. Thanks to the congressionally inspired Western Hemispheric Travel Initiative, with its requirement for overland passport controls, as well as newly imposed inspection procedures and border taxes, we are now experiencing a reversal of the historic trend towards reducing the presence of the border in our national life.

With a minority government in Canada and a lame-duck administration in the United States preoccupied with Iraq, this is not, arguably, the most propitious time for grand initiatives or possibly even modest ones. But relations between Ottawa and Washington have improved since the election of Stephen Harper. Our formidable commitment to fight terrorism in Afghanistan has increased goodwill toward Canada.

Why not begin now to explore ways to advance our national interest through greater recognition of the special nature of our relationship? The Prime Minister of Canada could propose that our two countries: 1. Commit to convene official annual summits between the president and the prime minister. These began in the Mulroney–Reagan years and were highly productive. But the practice lapsed. 2. Create a special secretariat for this purpose. 3. Reinstitute the commitment to hold quarterly meetings of our foreign ministers, a protocol established in the Reagan years, but also allowed to lapse. 4. Adopt the same practice for ministers in other key areas — e.g. energy, the environment, law enforcement. 5. Develop a protocol defining principles for co-operation, for example, requiring prior notification and opportunity for consultation with regard to any initiative that could have an adverse impact on the other's interests. Such a principle would be very meaningful for Canada. But it would also offer substantial benefit for the United States (think issues such as

legalization of marijuana). 6. Appoint personal envoys or czars, answerable directly to the president and prime minister, to take hold of the entire process of border facilitation. There is a more than a whiff of the 19th century in how we currently go about border management. At the primary border crossings, the problems of congestion, insufficient infrastructure and security remain unresolved. Our approach to land frontiers remains mired in obsolete notions of sovereignty as does our infrastructure. How else to explain the derailing by Homeland Security in Washington of the innovative pre-clearance scheme at the Fort Erie–Buffalo crossing? 7. Mandate a ministerial–led task force or special envoys, answerable to the president and prime minister, to begin planning for the negotiation of a new comprehensive agreement to create a single economic and security space embracing our two countries. This should include extending the scope of NAFTA, adopting a common external tariff, rules of origin, and customs union, strengthening dispute–settlement procedures, restricting or abolishing trade remedies, establishing a common security perimeter and furthering the free movement of people across our boundaries. 8. Privilege the bilateral route when it is to our advantage. As with NAFTA, the template that our two countries establish could then be available to Mexico or others.

Canada is in a special relationship with the United States. We should recognize it, build on it and be proud of it. – Allan Gotlieb is Senior Advisor at the law firm Bennett Jones and former Canadian ambassador to the United States.

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

Central Asia's military extravaganza puts NATO allies on notice

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BYLINE: Jonathan Manthorpe
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This morning, Russian President Vladimir Putin will play host to his Chinese counterpart and the leaders of four Central Asian nations as they watch a joint military exercise by 6,500 troops from the six countries.

This gathering is a highly symbolic moment in the 11-year development of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) and the clearest indication yet that the Moscow-Beijing axis is intent on creating an alternative power centre to Washington and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The SCO already includes countries with the largest known oil and gas reserves and controls the delivery routes to the huge energy markets of Europe and Asia. In July, they agreed to formalize coordination of their energy strategies by creating the so-called "Energy Club."

But today's war games are the first joint military exercise by troops from all members of the SCO, which includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well as Russia and China. Until now, the SCO has preferred to portray its security interests as limited to regional terrorism. It is also the first time the six leaders have observed the war games and manoeuvres as part of their annual summit.

In describing the event one Russian newspaper took the logical step of calling the SCO an "anti-NATO" group and the organizers of the leaders' summit held in Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek certainly wove that subtext into the proceedings.

A guest of honour was Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who delivered a predictable anti-American tirade from the podium and played up to Putin by condemning Washington's plans for an anti-missile defence network in Europe, which Moscow sees as threatening.

Iran would dearly love to join the SCO, but along with India, Pakistan and Mongolia, it is confined to observer status for now. Moscow and Beijing think that giving Iran full membership would be significantly more antagonistic to Washington and NATO than they are prepared to be at the moment.

But another guest was Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, who was assured by Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao that they were ready and willing to help rebuild his shattered country. Putin even proposed holding a special SCO summit to plan a reconstruction strategy for Afghanistan.

This raises the interesting notion that if NATO countries, including Canada, weary of trying to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, the countries of the SCO might take over the task.

Among SCO members Putin and Moscow are being most overt in displaying the organization as a strategic military alliance.

A few days ago Russian defence analyst Pavel Feigenhauer was quoted in Britain as saying: "As Moscow's relations with the West deteriorate, the Kremlin is doing its best to seek allies and is building up the SCO to counterbalance NATO."

Last December Russia's defence minister, Sergei Ivanov, went so far as to publicly voice the hope the SCO would fully align itself with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the seven-member military club of nations that used to be part of the Soviet Union.

At the moment the only SCO member that is not also in the CSTO is China, and Beijing is not quite ready to take the leap of being seen on such a militantly anti-American path.

A recent issue of China's state-owned World Military Affairs magazine underlined that today's military exercise, "targets no country, nor does it mean a military alliance."

But the article went on to repeat an oft-expressed charge that Washington has used the cover of the so-called "war on terrorism" to plant military bases in Central Asia with the aim of containing China and confusing Moscow and Beijing's relationship with Central Asia.

The SCO has already shown that getting American forces and influence out of Central Asia is a key objective and not an empty aspiration. At their 2005 summit SCO members called for all "foreign," i.e. Western and especially American, troops to leave Central Asia.

Soon afterwards SCO member Uzbekistan demanded the departure of American troops from an airbase that Washington had been using for the Afghan campaign. The U.S. has a similar base in Kyrgyzstan, but the Bishkek government seems willing to continue this arrangement — for the moment.

Sun International Affairs Columnist

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Newer tanks give Canucks muscle But crews in Afghanistan still must resort to water-filled cooling vests to cut the heat inside.

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The first of 20 newer Leopard 2 tanks for the Canadian Forces landed in Kandahar yesterday, but crews must still resort to water-filled cooling vests to cut the stifling heat inside the hulking steel beasts.

The tank, the first of 20 leased from Germany, was delivered by an Antonov transport aircraft in the early-morning hours.

The Leopard 2 tanks promise more firepower, better landmine protection, longer range and better mobility than the 30-year-old Leopard 1 Canadians now use in Afghanistan.

But for all that technical superiority, the Leopard 2 still doesn't have air conditioning — a key drawback in a land where high temperatures regularly reach well into the 40s Celsius and tank crews have suffered dehydration.

To avoid wilting in the extreme heat, the four crew members — pilot, gunner, loader and crew leader — wear cooling vests to circulate chilled water over their bodies.

"I don't know if it's the best way, but I can tell you it works," said Capt. Craig Volstad of the Lord Strathcona's Horse armoured regiment based in Edmonton.

The tank rolled off the Antonov aircraft two hours late, with mechanical problem in one of its turrets. Military spokesperson Capt. Hubert Genest called it a "minor glitch that will take 15 minutes to fix."

The 19 other 62-tonne tanks leased from the German army are expected to be delivered to Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan over the next few weeks.

Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of the Canadians in southern Afghanistan, says the Leopard 2 tanks, specially modified to resist roadside bombs, will offer better protection to armoured crews.

"Right now, enemy forces have weapons that could pierce a tank and injure a soldier inside," Juneau said. "With a vehicle that offers better protection, we are improving the odds of survival of the crew."

In Kandahar province, insurgents have rarely targeted tanks with roadside bombs, the biggest threat currently facing Canadian troops.

Newer tanks give Canucks muscle But crews in Afghanistan still must resort to water-filled cooling vests to

Instead, the Taliban have more frequently used improvised explosive devices against lighter armoured vehicles such as the Bison, Nyala RG-31 and the LAV * — troop-transport vehicles that are more vulnerable to such attacks.

Lt.-Col. Stephane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team in Afghanistan, has said that the new tanks won't be significantly reducing the threat to Canadian soldiers from roadside bombings.

But he said the tanks will likely make a difference in the field because they project an image of strength.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Critics rap cabinet shuffle Opposition leaders bemoan the new Harper government as more of the same.

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ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo of STEPHANE DION 2. photo of ELIZABETH MAY
BYLINE: ALAN FINDLAY, NATIONAL BUREAU
DATELINE: OTTAWA
WORD COUNT: 228

Political critics and observers greeted yesterday's cabinet shuffle with a disappointed yawn.

Hoping for more dramatic moves than simply adding one name, dropping another and switching seats for eight others, Opposition party leaders declared the new cabinet the same as the old one.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion poked fun at the self-styled "New Government" presenting its third variation of a cabinet.

"In fact, it's a government that's getting old pretty fast."

Other members of cabinet, including Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, should have been booted from their seats based on past performance, said Dion.

"It's only an attempt to find better communicators to communicate bad policy."

Rather than make superficial changes, Harper should have announced significant moves in policy such as announcing Canada's withdrawal from combat missions in Kandahar once its commitment expires in 2009, he said.

Standing outside Rideau Hall as the ministers were sworn into their new portfolios, NDP Leader Jack Layton agreed that Canadians looking for a fundamental change in government direction were left disappointed.

Replacing former defence minister Gordon O'Connor with Peter MacKay suggests little change in Canada's Afghanistan policy, he said.

"Frankly, this mission is the wrong mission for Canada," said Layton. "Mr. O'Connor didn't get that. I don't know if Mr. MacKay does."

Speaking for the Central Nova riding where she's aiming to personally unseat MacKay in the next election, Green party Leader Elizabeth May said Environment Minister John Baird should have been shuffled along with Flaherty and the others for his disappointing performance.

Critics rap cabinet shuffle Opposition leaders bemoan the new Harper government as more of the same.

"Given Mr. Harper's style of governing, shuffling cabinet ministers is not going to substantially change the government," said May.

Diane Ablonczy's modest debut in cabinet as secretary of state for small business and tourism was a good move, however, said May.

"It's about time she got a cabinet position," May said. "She can handle more than that."

The new team O'Connor was target from first day on job

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PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.08.15

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PAGE: A3

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Reuters CHANGING CHAT: Peter MacKay talks with Gordon O'Connor during a cabinet swearing-in ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa yesterday. MacKay will replace O'Connor as defence minister.

BYLINE: CP

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 263

Gordon O'Connor was a target from the day he was sworn in as Prime Minister Stephen Harper's first defence minister in February 2006.

O'Connor was demoted yesterday to become the new minister of national revenue, after months of attack from the opposition.

His background as a defence lobbyist; rumours of personality clashes with his senior soldier, Gen. Rick Hillier; mixed messages about Afghanistan; and his stiff, terse speaking style helped make him an easy mark for opposition snipers.

But the problems of O'Connor's tenure went beyond image, said David Bercuson, military historian and director of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary.

The complaints about O'Connor's earlier career as a lobbyist for military complaints were "a red herring."

The federal cabinet in order of precedence, which generally follows length of service in Parliament:

– Prime Minister: Stephen Harper

– Minister of Justice: Attorney General of Canada: Robert Nicholson

– Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver–Whistler Olympics: David Emerson

– Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec: Jean–Pierre Blackburn

– Minister of Veterans Affairs: Gregory Thompson

– Leader of the Government in the Senate; Secretary of State for Seniors: Marjory LeBreton

– Minister of Human Resources and Social Development: Monte Solberg

- Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Metis and non–Status Indians: Chuck Strahl
- Minister of Natural Resources: Gary Lunn
- Minister of Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency: Peter MacKay
- Minister of Fisheries and Oceans: Loyola Hearn
- Minister of Public Safety: Stockwell Day
- President of Treasury Board: Vic Toews
- President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification: Rona Ambrose
- Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: Diane Finley
- Minister of National Revenue: Gordon O'Connor
- Minister of International Co–operation: Bev Oda
- Minister of Industry: Jim Prentice
- Minister of the Environment: John Baird
- Minister of Foreign Affairs: Maxime Bernier
- Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities: Lawrence Cannon
- Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario: Tony Clement
- Minister of Finance: Jim Flaherty
- Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Minister for Official Languages: Josee Verner
- Minister of Public Works and Government Services: Michael Fortier
- Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform: Peter Van Loan
- Minister of Agriculture and AgriFood and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board: Gerry Ritz
- Chief Government Whip and Secretary of State: Jay Hill
- Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity: Jason Kenney
- Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade; Secretary of State for Sport: Helena Guergis
- Secretary of State for Agriculture: Christian Paradis
- Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism: Diane Ablonczy

Harper makes major cabinet changes

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PAGE: A1

ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo of STEPHEN HARPER 2. photo of RICK HILLIER Chief of Defence Staff says he's happy with Peter MacKay as the new defence minister.

BYLINE: KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 527

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has bumped a problem-plagued minister and rewarded a rising Conservative star in a bid to kick-start his stalled minority government with a new look this fall.

In a major cabinet shakeup yesterday, Harper dumped Gordon O'Connor from the hot-button Defence file, putting him in charge of the low-profile National Revenue Department.

His replacement is seasoned politician Peter MacKay, whose former job as foreign minister will now be occupied by Maxime Bernier.

Bernier, a Quebec MP with just two years of political experience under his belt, will serve as Canada's face on the world stage.

Jim Prentice, touted as one of Harper's most trusted and competent ministers, moves from Indian Affairs to Industry, while Carol Skelton, who is not seeking re-election, was relegated to the backbenches.

Harper made clear the overhaul of his inner circle should not be seen as a sign his government intends to shift gears or make sudden "U-turns."

"This shuffle enables a couple of changes I had to make, but in general what it does is give our ministers more varied experience, builds the team for the longer term, and enables us to make some of those changes while maintaining the continuity of the government," he said. "This government will continue to move forward on the priorities we have identified. These are the priorities that are important for Canada now and for the long term and we intend to stay on course."

Harper tried to publicly soften the blow for O'Connor, praising him for capably steering his department during a "historic period" of federal investments. He also gave the embattled minister the nod for developing a forward-thinking strategy to assert Canada's sovereignty in the North.

"Minister O'Connor has accomplished a great deal. At the same time, Minister O'Connor has spent his entire public service, which is almost 40 years, in one area, and that is National Defence," Harper said. "I think it's time for him to have some other experiences."

While shuffling the deck of the 26-member cabinet, Harper said the Conservative government will continue to focus on core priorities — protecting Arctic sovereignty, lowering taxes, tackling crime and strengthening the federation at home and abroad.

He promoted Gerry Ritz from his junior post to a full-fledged agriculture minister, moving Chuck Strahl over to Indian Affairs. Bev Oda, considered an under-performer in the Heritage Ministry, swapped spots with Josee Verner to become the new CIDA minister and Diane Ablonczy took a junior minister's post.

Harper said the appointment of two strong ministers in the critical Defence and Foreign Affairs posts underscores his government's commitment to Afghanistan.

"Obviously, the Afghan mission remains Canada's most important military and foreign affairs commitment in the world. We know there are challenges there, but at the same time, the United Nations wants us there, we made a commitment to our allies and a commitment to the Afghan people," he said.

"I believe we are making progress and this government strongly supports our men and women in uniform who are undertaking that difficult and dangerous work."

But critics insist Harper is trying to sell a flawed military mission that is mired in controversy simply by a changing of the guard.

"The problem is that the replacement minister MacKay was involved in the coverups and the failure to manage the Afghanistan mission," said Liberal Leader Stephane Dion. "He is replacing a minister who failed with another minister who failed."

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff who was rumoured to butt heads with O'Connor in past, was beaming after yesterday's swearing-in ceremony.

Asked if he's happy with the choice of his new defence minister, Hillier responded: "Very much so."

KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Shaggy dog with a sag in the middle

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DATE: 2007.08.17
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SECTION: News
PAGE: 46
BYLINE: COLIN MACLEAN, EDMONTON SUN FREELANCE
WORD COUNT: 158

THE CHURCHILL PROTOCOL

The Churchill Protocol is a paranoid military fantasy, a satire on Canada's place on the world stage and a terrific acting duel between two fine performers.

The first few minutes don't seem to be going anywhere and are tough sledding. But stick with it and the rewards are ample.

A Globe and Mail reporter thinks he is on the trail of a hot story.

There are reports from Churchill, Manitoba (the polar bear capital of Canada) that the Canadian military is ferrying in prisoners from Afghanistan.

The intrepid newshound tracks down one Col. Ronson who has obviously spent too much time in the north.

The Captain is importing goats from Afghanistan. His premise is we are too dependent on the weapons makers and he will train the goats to go to war as soldiers under the Canadian flag.

Observes the demented Colonel, "Canada doesn't have enough money for research and development."

So he has come up with a made-in-Canada solution to the country's problems.

He also thinks he can render himself invisible and is working on a piece of laxative artillery that will force the enemy into involuntary bowel movements.

The Churchill Protocol is a long, long shaggy dog story. It is really more of a skit and tends to sag in the middle.

The two actors, Patrick Gauthier and Kris Joseph, absolutely believe in their material, no matter how farfetched and ridiculous it seems, and deliver strong performances.

And there is an undercurrent of rather pointed social commentary. KEYWORDS=CANADA

Sticker shock over support for soldiers

SOURCETAG 0708170864
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.08.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 10
BYLINE: NEIL WAUGH
COLUMN: Editorial
WORD COUNT: 249

The yellow ribbon controversy hit a new low in Calgary this week when city garbage workers were ordered to scrape the "Support Our Troops" stickers off their truck bumpers.

This is the latest incident emanating from Calgary's loony city council and its bewildering Mayor David Bronconnier after a majority of councillors voted against the patriotic bumper stickers.

Edmonton city council gladly accepted the pro-military decals.

It was the right thing to do considering what these brave men and women are committed to these days in Afghanistan.

Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach also sensed a moment of political opportunism when he allowed provincial employees to put them on government vehicles after strong lobbying by the provincial sheriffs.

Unfortunately, union politics reared its ugly head and he was forced to make the bumper stickers voluntary for fear of a backlash from certain segments of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees.

But it's the Calgary situation that is the most disturbing and troubling, especially after the Calgary Police Association defied offensive municipal politicians and held a "yellow ribbon check-stop."

Police officers, transit drivers and other city of Calgary workers could simply drive up and get a ribbon.

In recent months, Bronconnier has been out-performing Liberal Leader Kevin Taft as the thorn in the Alberta Tories' side with his constant carping about infrastructure money.

He appears to have political ambitions beyond civic politics. But his logic-defying opposition to the ribbons clearly has hurt his chances.

The whole debate – whether coming from Calgary city council or cynical federal Liberal Leader Stephane Dion – seems so silly and frivolous.

Remember, it's our troops who are in a distant and dangerous land putting their lives on the line for their country.

Supporting our Armed Forces has nothing to do with whether you agree or disagree with the Afghan mission. It's about the men and women who risk their lives to protect our way of life.

Why quibble over putting a sticker on the back of a Calgary garbage truck? Shame on Cowtown.

Dead soldier's mom outraged Wonders why city permits Flames stickers on vehicles but bans troop-support decals

SOURCETAG: 0708170704
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 4
ILLUSTRATION: photo of ANDREW EYKELENBOOM Army medic
BYLINE: TARINA WHITE, SUN MEDIA
WORD COUNT: 239

The mother of a fallen Calgary soldier is outraged city garbage trucks are emblazoned with stickers supporting a hockey team but can't show the same pride for local troops.

Maureen Eykelenboom, whose 23-year-old son Cpl. Andrew Eykelenboom was killed last August by a suicide bomber in Afghanistan, said she was disgusted to see a garbage truck yesterday sporting a Calgary Flames logo, in light of this week's forced removal of yellow Support Our Troops ribbon decals from a dozen waste trucks.

"What is with our society that we can support a sports team but we cannot support our young men and women who are willing to risk their lives for our freedom?" she asked. "It was one more kick in the gut."

Last month, council shot down a motion from Ald. Ric McIver to put troop decals on the entire civic fleet.

In the absence of new direction from council, the existing policy banning third-party decals continues, said city spokeswoman Astrid Deslandes.

That means no third-party signage is permitted on city vehicles -- aside from sponsorship agreements -- and any offending material is removed during maintenance.

On Tuesday, a dozen garbage trucks bearing the troop decals were ordered into maintenance bays to pull the decorations.

A city sanitation worker who didn't want his name printed for fear of reprisal said he's fuming his boss allows Calgary Flames stickers on garbage trucks but won't permit the troop decals.

"Where is the legality that you can put a Flames sticker on but not a yellow ribbon?" the city employee said yesterday. "What's the difference?"

Eykelenboom said banning troop decals is insulting.

"It does not speak well of those who were elected into politics in Calgary," she said.

"I would challenge them to ask a parent of a fallen soldier to come and speak to them."

McIver plans to bring the issue back to council Sept. 10.

Decals will be offered for sale at city hall and the city's website starting Monday. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Dead soldier's mom outraged Wonders why city permits Flames stickers on vehicles but bans troop support

Cabinet shuffle ho–hum hopscotch

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SECTION: News
PAGE: A2
COLUMN: Commentary
BYLINE: John Gormley
SOURCE: The StarPhoenix
WORD COUNT: 759

If you've ever questioned, as I frequently do, the attention span, political agendas and even intelligence of many in the Canadian mainstream media, consider the last week.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper shuffled his cabinet, changing roles for eight of the PM's 26 ministers.

It was neither large–scale nor a change to the face or direction of Harper's government.

In fact, only one person left Cabinet — Saskatoon's Carol Skelton, who is retiring — and one new person entered, Calgary's Diane Ablonczy.

The only developments that punctuated this yawner were a new defence minister, Peter MacKay, who will be important in the war in Afghanistan and the fact that the agriculture minister for all Canada is now Saskatchewan's own Gerry Ritz.

Like most mundane political stories, the cabinet shuffle came and went.

And like all political stories, the media reports on the events, the pundits prognosticate and analyze, and the critics condemn. So it goes.

But where is the line drawn when the media reports, conjectures and speculates for days before anything actually happens? Alas, the famous, time–honoured and lame speculation piece.

The first cabinet speculation story ran five days before the actual shuffle. And it was all the media could do to vainly try reining in themselves from the incessant (and ultimately incorrect) stories of what was going to happen.

Based on "sources," "un–named government spokespersons" and presumably the self–taught wisdom of the intellectual heavyweights in journalism, the cabinet shuffle was all but a fait accompli even before it happened.

Day in and day out, speculation, advance punditry — it was all there, from "a bitter bill for overlooked backbenchers" to a Prime Minister anxiously making the cabinet picks "with trepidation."

The stories posed — and then fake wrestled with — such thorny questions as can Harper's cabinet–making ever revive his flagging fortunes, will women and under–represented regions and minorities ever, ever get a

fair shake?

One premier was even quoted as hoping the minister of finance would be gone (he isn't) and another politician critic announced four days before the Cabinet shuffle that it won't alter Harper's style of governing one bit.

The advance stories also trumpeted a coming smaller cabinet (nope), "most ministries in for a house cleaning" (no again) and even a detailed analysis of cabinet shuffles dating back to 1989 which reveal — ready for this scoop — that shuffles have no bearing on public opinion.

It is this nugget that underscores how this cabinet shuffle obsession strikes most Canadians. It is summer and most of us couldn't care less.

We are eating outdoors, hopefully with water in sight, kicking back, enjoying our families and friends, having a cool one and — implicitly the message for the media is — tell us when something happens that really matters to our lives.

Cabinet shuffles involving one new face and fewer than one-third of ministers getting new jobs just don't rate. And, they will have no bearing — positively or negatively — on public opinion.

In trying to determine why the media spent this many hours on a non-story before it was even officially a non-story, gives some insight into what passes for Canadian political journalism today.

Stephen Harper regards the media not to be fawned upon and sucked up to. His disdain for gotcha journalism and constant attack pack mentality is palpable.

So he treats the media with reserve, indifference and a detached professionalism — politicians have a job to do and so does the media.

For old hands in the Parliamentary press gallery who see their role as active (non-elected) participants in the process as gatekeepers, provocateurs or power brokers, the Harper shunning is hard to take.

For example, neither the PM nor his staff announced the date of the cabinet shuffle which led, in part, to the media tripping all over itself for five days in the battle to keep churning out what turned out to be meaningless conjecture.

During this foot race to futility, one of the few accurate comments came from a columnist who prefaced his speculation piece as likely containing "zero grams of fact."

He explained this because — unlike the Liberals who always carefully leaked accurate information in advance to co-operative journalists — in the Harper world things are clear as "a Newfoundland fog."

To be fair, for some in the political media, the dog days of summer may have caught up with them — the doldrums of a slow political news cycle can lead to the temptation to keep recycling speculation pieces longer than they normally would have.

But in an odd way, this entire media story may show us what lies ahead.

When a frustrated, isolated and defensive media react to Harper they often feel compelled to sprinkle even the most pedestrian story with repeated reference to the PM's stiffness, tight control over decision making and the "fact" that he cannot poll high enough numbers to win a majority government.

Eventually this may catch up with the prime minister. But if the interminable cabinet speculation stories are

any example, people might start tuning out the media because the credibility and trust gap is just too large.

Whatever the pre-cabinet shuffle stores were, they certainly didn't look much like news.

— — —

Gormley can be heard Monday to Friday at 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on NewsTalk 650

New tanks better equipped, but lack air conditioning

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DATELINE: KANDAHAR
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 135

The first of 20 Leopard 2 tanks for the Canadian Forces landed here yesterday. But crews must still resort to water-filled cooling vests to cut the stifling heat inside.

The Leopard 2 tanks promise more firepower, better landmine protection, longer range and better mobility than the 30-year-old Leopard 1 Canadians are using in war-torn Afghanistan. But the Leopard 2 still doesn't have air conditioning — a key drawback in a land where high temperatures regularly reach well into the 40s Celsius and tank crews have suffered dehydration.

To avoid wilting in the extreme heat, the four crew members — pilot, gunner, loader and crew leader — wear cooling vests to circulate chilled water over their bodies.

"I don't know if it's the best way, but it works," said Captain Craig Volstad of the Edmonton-based Lord Strathcona's Horse armoured regiment.

Britain beefs up aid, military presence in Afghanistan

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DATELINE: KABUL
BYLINE: Jason Straziuso
SOURCE: The Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 603

As its military winds down the campaign in Iraq, Britain is pouring more soldiers and aid money into Afghanistan to fight a resurgent Taliban and booming drug trade it says pose a direct threat to Britons.

Britain's ambassador in Kabul said the British government began increasing its focus on Afghanistan shortly before the end of former prime minister Tony Blair's tenure in June, and made it even more of a priority under Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Afghanistan "matters to us because a high proportion of the terrorism investigations in the U.K. can be traced back to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area," Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles said.

"It matters to us because 90 per cent of the heroin on British streets comes from Afghanistan, and it matters to us because it is desperately poor, and we have a commitment through the International Development Act of tackling poverty around the world."

During a visit to the United States late last month, Brown called Afghanistan "the front line against terrorism," in contrast to U.S. President George W. Bush's common refrain that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror.

Britain will increase its troop strength in Afghanistan to 7,700 by year's end, up from 7,000 today and 3,600 a year ago, in what Cowper-Coles labelled a "sensible tactical adjustment" based on commanders' advice.

British troops are responsible for Helmand province in southern Afghanistan — scene of some of the heaviest fighting over the last two years and the largest opium poppy-growing region in the world.

Canada has about 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, mostly in adjacent Kandahar province.

In Iraq, Britain has handed over two of its three bases in Basra to the Iraqi government, and in the coming weeks its force level will drop to 5,000, down from 40,000 after the March 2003 invasion.

"I think there is a general feeling in the United Kingdom concerning Iraq, as far as the U.K.'s efforts are concerned, that there is not much more than can be done with military force, so we can logically shift more focus to Afghanistan," said Christopher Langton, a former British colonel who is an analyst at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Britain's move to Afghanistan, where the U.S. has 25,000 soldiers, "is proof that we're not leaving the United States in the lurch, and although I'm quite sure they'd rather we stay in Iraq they also know we don't have endless resources," Langton said.

David Miliband, Britain's new foreign secretary, chose Afghanistan as his first overseas trip.

Afterward, he wrote in the British magazine *The Spectator* that "most British terrorism investigations trace back to the training camps just across the border, in western Pakistan."

Police said two of the suspects in the London subway and bus bombings on July 7, 2005, had attended training camps in Pakistan, as did the ringleader of failed attacks two weeks later.

"There's a real concern among ministers that, first of all, Afghanistan is one of our top foreign policy priorities and secondly that we need to get it right," Cowper-Coles said.

He said NATO's International Security Assistance Force, including British troops, will "really raise its game on counternarcotics" next growing season.

"You're going to see increased disruption of traffickers. You're going to see some serious targeted, non-negotiated eradication (of poppy fields). In short, the big traffickers are going to start feeling the heat."

Heroin accounted for nearly a third of the total number of drug-related deaths in Britain in 2005, the last year for which statistics are available, according to the government.

Drugscope, a British drug information charity, says heroin use has levelled off, however, in part because that segment of the population is aging and fewer young people are taking up the drug. The charity estimates heroin had a street value of \$100 US per gram in Britain in 2005.

On the aid front, Britain's Department for International Development will spend more than \$200 million in Afghanistan this year.

Homegrown terrorist convicted in U.S. Declared an 'enemy combatant' by president

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DATE: 2007.08.17

PAGE: A18

SECTION: World Wire

WORD COUNT: 295

DataSpecials Jay Weaver MIAMI — Jose Padilla was convicted of federal terrorism charges Thursday in the Bush administration's most high-profile case against homegrown terror.

The 12 jurors deliberated just 11 hours, sorting through hundreds of pages of evidence from the complicated trial that lasted three months. Co-defendants Adhan Amin Hassoun and Kifah Weal Jayyousi also were found guilty on all charges.

Padilla, who was held for 3 1/2 years in a military prison after Bush declared him an "enemy combatant" and had been dubbed "the dirty bomber," sat at the defence table, hunched over, staring blankly at the judge as the verdict was read. He betrayed no emotion.

U.S. District Judge Marcia Cooke set a Dec. 5 sentencing date for all three defendants. Padilla could face life in prison.

The seven women and five men found by unanimous vote that Padilla, his mentor Hassoun, and Hassoun's colleague, Jayyousi, conspired to commit murder in Islamic conflicts abroad and to provide material support toward that goal.

The three were accused of being part of a North American support cell that provided supplies, money and recruits to groups of Islamic extremists.

Hassoun, whom Padilla met at a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., mosque, and Jayyousi were accused of publishing militant propaganda, raising money for "violent jihad" in Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya and recruiting Padilla and other soldiers to take up arms in the name of Islam.

The spectators in the packed courtroom included Padilla's mother, Jayyousi's wife and Hassoun's sister.

All three woman bowed their heads as the verdict was read, showing little emotion, seemingly resigned to the outcome. There had been a feeling in the courtroom that because the jury came back so quickly, a guilty verdict was inevitable.

Prosecutors built much of their case around Padilla's mujahedeen data form, a recruitment document dated July 24, 2000, which the CIA said was recovered from an al-Qaida safe house after the U.S.

military invaded Afghanistan in fall 2001.

— McClatchy-Tribune Information Services

PM needs oomph infusion

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PAGE: A8
COLUMN: Barbara Yaffe
BYLINE: Barbara Yaffe
SOURCE: Vancouver Sun
WORD COUNT: 596

Stephen Harper recognizes the obvious: He needs to reinvent a governing team that is failing either to inspire or excite voters.

The problem is largely of his own making. As a well-recognized control freak, he's hogging the spotlight and is, well, a bit of a stiff.

No charisma. Incapable of executing a kibitz. Thin skinned. And has a terrible rapport with the media.

So there Harper was on Tuesday introducing cabinet changes that potentially could bolster Conservative popularity — that is, if the PM also changes his own behaviour.

Past experience shows cabinet rejigging alone never suffices to change the course of popularity trends.

To date, Conservatives have not been able to nudge polling numbers to a point that would carry them beyond minority government standing.

Harper must drop the attitude and allow his ministers, especially the outgoing and capable ones, to do more of the talking.

He also needs to find a way to better pitch the Afghan military mission to the public, and reach out to women voters who have consistently given him the cold shoulder when the curtain is drawn in the polling booth.

The PM did himself no favours on the gender side, with the new cabinet featuring just five females, instead of the six it had before.

None of the five are in major portfolios or are particularly adept communicators. Indeed, one — Senator Marjorie LeBreton — doesn't even sit in the Commons.

Saskatchewan's Carol Skelton, who had served notice that she wouldn't be running in the next election, left the revenue portfolio, a junior ministry, open for a demoted Gordon O'Connor.

After a truly dismal performance, O'Connor finally got booted from defence. But notably, Harper, who doesn't ever like getting it wrong or admitting error, refused to ditch him entirely.

While talented Alberta MP Diane Ablonczy was promoted, to become secretary of state for tourism and small business, that isn't a full cabinet position.

Harper clearly cannot find women in Conservative ranks in whom he has confidence. The two highest profile changes in cabinet involved Peter MacKay who became Defence Minister and Maxime Bernier who became Foreign Affairs Minister.

MacKay's new job makes sense; so many military bases are located in his home region of Atlantic Canada. And MacKay has shown himself to be a good communicator. He's bound to do a better job than O'Connor in stickhandling the Afghanistan file.

Because so much of that responsibility requires bringing Quebecers onside, now that the Vandoos have joined the mission, it's anticipated that Bernier will share responsibilities in that province with MacKay who continues working on his French.

The Bernier appointment, reflecting a promotion from his Industry post, is a bit of a mystery given that Bernier —forever touted by Ottawa-watchers as a handsome guy and a great dresser — is not perceived to have accomplished all that much in his former department.

Other interesting moves put Jim Prentice into Industry and former Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl, an affable and informal chap who has never knowingly offended anyone in any way, into the always-sensitive Indian Affairs portfolio.

Wisely, Harper did not try to mend what was not broken.

He kept solidly performing ministers like Jim Flaherty in Finance, John Baird in Environment, Monte Solberg in Human Resources and Stockwell Day in Public Security, right where they were.

The cabinet shuffle should be seen as part of a broader strategy on the prime minister's part to inject political energy into his government at a time when it's looking as though — with the exception of exerting Canada's northern sovereignty — it's running out of ideas.

The famous five priorities with which the Harperites launched their governing stint in early 2006 have exhausted themselves.

Harper, instead of having the Parliament resume as planned on Sept. 17, may well decide to prorogue the House and launch a whole new session of Parliament in October, replete with a Throne Speech setting forward a fresh set of objectives.

With no near-term election in sight, the PM will want to use the next year or so in his mahogany-panelled office injecting some badly needed oomph into the Conservatives' governing program.

Barbara Yaffe is a Vancouver Sun columnist. E-mail: byaffe@png.canwest.com