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Military boosts funeral stipend

IDNUMBER 200706190114
PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 321

Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan will now be treated the same as fallen RCMP officers when it comes to their funerals.

The Defence Department quietly confirmed yesterday that it has more than doubled the burial stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty, bringing the military in line with support the Mounties offer members.

The new rate of \$12,700 came into effect June 1 amid an uproar over unpaid funeral expenses, but will be retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began its involvement in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001.

It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised. Several families of members killed in Afghanistan and elsewhere were forced to make up the difference between the funeral stipend and the actual burial cost.

In late May, The Canadian Press documented three cases of relatives coming up short — reports Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor initially dismissed. Angered by the brush-off, the parents of one fallen soldier, Cpl. Matthew Dinning, came forward at a news conference on Parliament Hill to outline how they had asked for reimbursement twice in the year since their son had been killed.

O'Connor's office declined an interview yesterday, but a spokesperson emphasized the increase that the federal Treasury Board finally approved was something the minister had been seeking for many months.

"We got what we asked for," said Isabelle Bouchard.

Bouchard said defence staff modelled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty. Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan and a handful of others have died in training accidents.

The RCMP policy, on which National Defence based its new schedule, was last updated in November 2006 and a spokesperson said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies all of their funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current."

More than 100 die in Afghanistan battle

IDNUMBER 200706190100
PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A6
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
SOURCE: Associated Press and Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 517

More than 100 people including militants, civilians and police have been killed in a fierce three-day battle between NATO troops and insurgents, Afghan officials said yesterday, while U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a suspected al-Qaida compound, killing seven boys and several fighters.

In the south, in Uruzgan province, the Taliban launched what appears to be its biggest offensive of the year, forcing NATO troops to respond.

Dutch military officials said hundreds of Taliban fighters have attacked police posts, sparking a three-day battle officials said was ongoing.

The mass attack appeared to be a change in strategy by the insurgents, who have been relying on suicide and roadside bombings so far this year.

Maj.-Gen. Jouke Eikelboom, director of operations with the Dutch military, said Karzai and the Uruzgan governor had asked for military support after several hundred Taliban fighters attacked the district of Chora.

Precise casualty figures were not available because of the continued fighting, though two Afghan officials said more than 100 people had been killed, including at least 16 police.

Afghan officials said Taliban fighters sought shelter in civilian homes and that NATO bombers later targeted them. One wounded man at the main Uruzgan hospital told Associated Press that 18 members of his family had been killed.

"I have talked to President Karzai and asked him to send helicopters to ferry the wounded to Kabul," said Mullah Ahmadullah Khan, the head of Uruzgan's provincial council, who estimated the clashes in Chora had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

To the east, in Paktika province, U.S.-coalition warplanes targeted a compound Sunday that contained a mosque and a madrasa, or Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys.

Paktika Gov. Akram Akhpelwak said there normally is strong co-ordination between the government and international forces but said he was not told of the missile strike beforehand.

Authorities are working with foreign forces "to have better co-ordination and to not have these misunderstandings, but today we had a misunderstanding and the people will be unhappy," Akhpelwak said by

telephone. "We will go to the area and discuss the issue with the people and apologize to the people."

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," said Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesperson. He accused the militants of not letting the children leave the compound.

"If we knew that there were children inside the building, there was no way that that air strike would have occurred," said Sgt. 1st Class Dean Welch, another coalition spokesperson.

In Uruzgan, an official close to the governor, who asked not to be identified, said 70 to 75 civilians had been killed or wounded, while more than 100 Taliban and more than 35 police had been killed.

Dr. Hajed Noor, a doctor at Uruzgan's main hospital in the provincial capital, Tirin Kot, said 34 wounded people had been brought to the hospital, including nine women and seven children. He said his patients reported that many other wounded were back in Chora district and couldn't make it to the hospital because of the fighting.

Speaking by phone from a hospital bed, Janu Akha, 62, said bombs hit his village of Qala-i-Ragh on Saturday.

"Eight bombs fell in my village," Akha said. "On Sunday, my relatives buried 18 members of my family, including women and children."

Rethink '09 pullout, Commons committee says

IDNUMBER 200706190099
PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A6
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 238

The House of Commons defence committee says the conflict in Afghanistan will likely go on well past 2009 and Parliament should hold a debate next year to decide whether to extend Canada's mission in the war-torn country.

The all-party committee's long-awaited report was tabled yesterday.

"If we leave, someone else will have to carry the load," it said.

A recent Decima Research poll found a majority of Canadians wanted to see the army's combat mission end on schedule in February 2009.

The Commons committee study, which has been months in the making, said the army's role in fighting the Taliban-led insurgency in the southern region of Afghanistan is largely misunderstood by the Canadian public.

"Nearly everyone we met, including military commanders, said more development was needed, but they pointed out that until an adequate degree of security existed, development aid could not flow to the degree desired," the report said.

Both the New Democrats and Liberals have made the argument that the mission in Kandahar was more about war-fighting than nation-building. Both the Bloc Quebecois and the New Democrats wrote dissenting reports, with the NDP calling for immediate withdrawal.

Development aid was slow in arriving following last fall's major Canadian-led offensive but the committee's 174-page report suggested the Canadian International Development Agency now has a better handle on the situation.

There has been friction over the reluctance of some NATO allies to allow their troops to join the combat operations in the south.

"While we might encourage others to do more," the report said, "there is no more effective way to bring others along than to continue to play a meaningful role ourselves."

100 dead in Afghan battle; Taliban launch mass offensive; no reports of Cdn. troop involvement in fighting

IDNUMBER 200706190035
PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)
DATE: 2007.06.19
SECTION: News
PAGE: C1
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 445

More than 100 people including militants, civilians, and police have been killed in a fierce three-day battle between NATO troops and insurgents, Afghan officials said yesterday, while U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a suspected al-Qaida compound, killing seven boys and several fighters.

Afghanistan has seen a sharp spike in violence the last several days, leading to a mounting number of civilian casualties — deaths and injuries sapping support for foreign troops and the government of President Hamid Karzai.

But in the south, in Uruzgan province, the Taliban launched what appears to be their biggest mass offensive of the year, forcing NATO troops to respond.

Dutch military officials said hundreds of Taliban fighters have attacked police posts en masse, sparking a three-day battle officials said was still continuing.

The mass attack appeared to be a change in strategy by the insurgents, who have been relying on an increasing number of suicide and roadside bombings so far this year.

Maj.-Gen. Jouke Eikelboom, director of operations with the Dutch military, said Karzai and the Uruzgan governor had asked for military support after several hundred Taliban fighters attacked the district of Chora.

Precise casualty figures were not immediately available because of the continued fighting, though two Afghan officials said more than 100 people had been killed, including at least 16 police.

Afghan officials said Taliban fighters sought shelter in civilian homes and that NATO bombers later targeted them. One wounded man at the main Uruzgan hospital told The Associated Press that 18 members of his family had been killed.

"I have talked to President Karzai and asked him to send helicopters to ferry the wounded to Kabul," said Mullah Ahmidullah Khan, the head of Uruzgan's provincial council, who estimated the clashes in Chora had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

Canada has about 2,500 troops operating mainly in Kandahar province. There have been no reports of any involvement in the fighting elsewhere.

To the east, in Paktika province, U.S.-coalition warplanes targeted a compound Sunday that also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys ages 10 to 16.

Paktika Gov. Akram Akhpelwak said there normally is strong co-ordination between the government and international forces but said he was not told of the missile strike beforehand.

Authorities are working with foreign forces "to have better co-ordination and to not have these misunderstandings, but today we had a misunderstanding and the people will be unhappy," Akhpelwak said by telephone. "We will go to the area and discuss the issue with the people and apologize to the people."

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," said Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman. He accused the militants of not letting the children leave the compound.

Military increases funeral payments for fallen soldiers; New rate retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began Afghanistan campaign

IDNUMBER 200706190029
PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)
DATE: 2007.06.19
SECTION: News
PAGE: C8
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 464

Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan will now be treated the same as fallen RCMP officers when it comes to their funerals.

The Defence Department quietly confirmed yesterday that it has more than doubled the burial stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty, bringing the military in line with support the Mounties offer members.

The new rate of \$12,700 came into effect June 1 amid an uproar over unpaid funeral expenses, but will be retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began its involvement in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001.

It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised. Several families of members killed in Afghanistan and elsewhere were forced to make up the difference between the funeral stipend and the actual burial cost.

In late May, The Canadian Press documented three cases of relatives coming up short — reports Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor initially dismissed. Angered by the brush-off, the parents of one fallen soldier, Cpl. Matthew Dinning, came forward at a news conference on Parliament Hill to outline how they had asked for reimbursement twice in the year since their son had been killed.

A request for an interview with O'Connor was declined yesterday, but a spokeswoman emphasized the increase that the federal Treasury Board finally approved was something the minister had been seeking for many months.

"We got what we asked for," said Isabelle Bouchard.

The new benefits package also pays for items not previously covered, such as obituary notices, flowers and receptions following the service.

Bouchard said defence staff modeled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty. Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan and a handful of others have died in training accidents.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier directed the military's casualty support centre to write to the families of Canadians who've died since 2001 to ensure they submit claims for the items that had not been previously covered and to verify whether they, too, suffered a shortfall.

Military increases funeral payments for fallen soldiers; New rate retroactive to all service members killed since

Hillier also telephoned the Dinning family to apologize for not dealing with their concerns sooner.

"He said that now there is a centralized claim centre, whereas before each base commander handled the families' bills," said Lincoln Dinning, in an interview from his Wingham, Ont., home.

"We're glad we went public because we know that it will definitely help other families."

The RCMP policy, on which National Defence based its new schedule, was last updated in November 2006 and a spokeswoman said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies all of their funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current."

Liberal MP Dan McTeague said giving military families the same consideration as those with the RCMP was long overdue.

"It shouldn't take The Canadian Press to have raised this issue," he said.

"This was a glaring omission and the reality has been that it's only been through the anguish of families that these matters are brought to public attention."

Canadian troops act as gatekeepers in Kandahar; Soldiers sort friend from foe out of 1,500 Afghans who enter military base each day

IDNUMBER 200706190028
PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)
DATE: 2007.06.19
SECTION: News
PAGE: C8
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 492

Canadian soldiers who have been manning a key entrance to the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield say they have learned a lot from the 1,500 Afghans who pass through the gates each day.

And they've taught them a few things too.

"We found that they've been working with us so long, we've been adapting some of their culture, they've been taking a lot of ours too," said Cpl. Justin Smith, 22, from Windsor, N.S.

"A lot of our mannerisms they've been picking up, like giving us the thumbs up. They are a lot more tolerant than most people think."

The cultural connection happens against the unlikely backdrop of gun towers and rolls of barbed wire near Entry Control Point Three — ECP3 in military parlance.

It is the entry point for every person and item coming into Kandahar Airfield, home base for thousands of soldiers from around the world fighting insurgents in Afghanistan.

This platoon of Canadians have manned ECP3 through the hail, heat and dust of the last seven months. Now they are just under a week shy of completing their tour of duty in Kandahar.

More than 300 trucks rumble and belch their way each day through bomb-sniffing dogs and a giant X-ray machine before their cargo — from building supplies to Whoppers for the Burger King on base — is allowed in.

Their drivers and the day labourers coming onto the base must snake through a separate entrance, presenting three or four times one of the coloured passes that dictate how much access to the grounds they can have.

A line winds around wooden fence posts. There's a separate section for the trusted agents and the 'Grandpas.'

"They call the elders Baba or Grandpa. If a guy jumps in the line, they'll club him, but they'll push the Grandpas to the front of the line," said Warrant Officer Chris Saunders, 36, the senior non-commissioned officer second-in-command at ECP3.

To show deference to Afghan culture, the soldiers decided to allow the elders to have their own queue.

The challenge was how to pick a cut-off age.

Canadian troops act as gatekeepers in Kandahar; Soldiers sort friend from foe out of 1,500 Afghans who enter

"A lot of these Afghans from the villages: they've had a hard life. They age quickly," said Saunders.

"I picked the number: they at least had to be older than me so it's 1965 or before, or you're not a Grandpa."

Two gun towers stand over the entry point, while soldiers on the ground below search all local nationals coming into the camp at several points before they're allowed to go on their way.

They have to turn in cellphones, pens, batteries, mirrors — anything that can be used to communicate details of the base to the outside world.

It's an arduous task. Clearing the truck bays can take hours and the personnel searches longer still.

"It's such a dull job sometimes, and it's long and hot and boring, but you still have to be alert, keep your wits about you," said Sapper Willard Myer, 26.

"Every now and again a local national, not knowing what the gate is, will try and come in. You've got to be able to determine: is that person a threat? Is it worth firing warning shots or can you simply wave them away and then they will understand the point?"

Though there's been no major incident at the gate since Canadians began manning it over a year ago, Saunders says it is only a matter of time.

Despite searches that range from pat-downs to X-rays to a look inside each pair of shoes, security has been breached.

Soldiers have found people trying to smuggle items as innocuous as DVD players outside the camp, to one man who had the blueprints for the forward operating bases hidden in his clothes.

Afghans give thumbs up to Canadian gatekeepers at Kandahar

IDNUMBER 200706190062
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.06.19
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
BYLINE: STEPHANIE LEVITZ The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 492

Canadian soldiers who have been manning a key entrance to the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield say they have learned a lot from the 1,500 Afghans who pass through the gates each day.

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Though there's been no major incident at the gate since Canadians began manning it over a year ago, Saunders says it is only a matter of time.

Despite searches that range from pat-downs to X-rays to a look inside each pair of shoes, security has been breached.

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Funeral stipend doubled for soldiers' families

IDNUMBER 200706190060

PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: News

PAGE: A7

BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER The Canadian Press

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

WORD COUNT: 448

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"He said that now there is a centralized claim centre, whereas before each base commander handled the families' bills," said Lincoln Dinning, in an interview from his Wingham, Ont., home.

"We're glad we went public because we know that it will definitely help other families."

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Liberal MP Dan McTeague said giving military families the same consideration as those with the RCMP was overdue.

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Large battle kills more than 100 people in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200706190038
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.06.19
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: NOOR KHAN The Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 405

More than 100 people including militants, civilians, and police have been killed in a fierce three-day battle between NATO troops and insurgents, Afghan officials said Monday.

The news comes on the same day that U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a suspected al-Qaida compound, killing seven boys and several fighters.

Afghanistan has seen a sharp spike in violence the last several days, leading to a mounting number of civilian casualties — deaths and injuries sapping support for foreign troops and the government of President Hamid Karzai.

But in the south, in Uruzgan province, the Taliban launched what appears to be their biggest mass offensive of the year, forcing NATO troops to respond.

Dutch military officials said hundreds of Taliban fighters have attacked police posts en masse, sparking a three-day battle officials said was still continuing.

The mass attack appeared to be a change in strategy by the insurgents, who have been relying on an increasing number of suicide and roadside bombings so far this year.

Maj.-Gen. Jouke Eikelboom, director of operations with the Dutch military, said Karzai and the Uruzgan governor had asked for military support after several hundred Taliban fighters attacked the district of Chora.

Precise casualty figures were not immediately available because of the continued fighting, though two Afghan officials said more than 100 people had been killed, including at least 16 police.

Afghan officials said Taliban fighters sought shelter in civilian homes and that NATO bombers later targeted them. One wounded man at the main Uruzgan hospital told The Associated Press that 18 members of his family had been killed.

"I have talked to President Karzai and asked him to send helicopters to ferry the wounded to Kabul," said Mullah Ahmadullah Khan, the head of Uruzgan's provincial council, who estimated the clashes in Chora had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

Canada has about 2,500 troops operating mainly in Kandahar province. There have been no reports of any involvement in the fighting elsewhere.

To the east, in Paktika province, U.S.-coalition warplanes targeted a compound Sunday that also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys ages 10 to 16.

Paktika Gov. Akram Akhpelwak said there normally is strong co-ordination between the government and international forces but said he was not told of the missile strike beforehand.

Authorities are working with foreign forces "to have better co-ordination and to not have these misunderstandings, but today we had a misunderstanding and the people will be unhappy," Akhpelwak said by telephone. "We will go to the area and discuss the issue with the people and apologize."

DND raises burial stipend; Soldiers' families to receive \$12,700

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

BYLINE: Noor Khan

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: o'connor

WORD COUNT: 244

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Scores killed in three-day battle in Afghanistan; Deaths sap support for foreign troops

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Murray Brewster

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 291

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It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised. Several families of members killed in Afghanistan and elsewhere were forced to make up the difference between the funeral stipend and the actual burial cost.

In late May, The Canadian Press documented three cases of relatives coming up short – reports Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor initially dismissed. Angered by the brush-off, the parents of one fallen soldier, Cpl. Matthew Dinning, came forward at a news conference on Parliament Hill to outline how they had asked for reimbursement twice in the year since their son had been killed.

A request for an interview with O'Connor was declined yesterday, but a spokeswoman emphasized the increase that the federal Treasury Board finally approved was something the minister had been seeking for many months.

"We got what we asked for," said Isabelle Bouchard.

The new benefits package also pays for items not previously covered, such as obituary notices, flowers and receptions following the service.

Bouchard said defence staff modeled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty. Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan and a handful of others have died in training accidents.

U.S. troops to get new deck of cards

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

COLUMN: In brief

WORD COUNT: 45

The Pentagon is sending another deck of playing cards to troops in Iraq, this time showing some of the country's most precious archeological sites instead of the most–wanted people.

Some 40,000 new decks of playing cards will be sent to troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Woman's candles raising money for soldiers' families

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: NovaScotia

PAGE: B7

BYLINE: Deborah Mensah–bonsu

ILLUSTRATION: Corrina Kelly of Middle Sackville has been selling redcandles to help raise money for the families of fallen Canadian soldiers. (Ingrid Bulmer / Staff)

WORD COUNT: 259

June has been filled with angry words and emotional debate over a lack of financial support to families of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, which total 57 after the death of Master Cpl. Darrell Priede at the end of May.

Corrina Kelly of Middle Sackville has taken it upon herself to raise money for the families of soldiers who have been lost.

Ms. Kelly has been a member of the military for 15 years. When she is not working or taking care of three attention–needy toddlers, all under the age of six, she is fundraising. Since Easter she has been selling red candles encircled with yellow ribbons to friends, neighbours and local businesses, for about \$20 apiece.

"I don't know anyone who died personally, but I have friends serving in Afghanistan. It hits the military community hard every time we lose someone and my heart goes out to the families," she said.

She has approached several local businesses to help her sell the candles and is looking to garner more support.

"It's a lot of legwork and I'd love to have more help."

She said other organizations which participate in fundraising, like the Military Family Resource Centre, have their heart in the right place, but don't give direct donations to the families.

Scott Windover, of the support centre, said fundraising goes back to the military community, in general, including deployment services that foster friendships between soldiers, and workshops for first aid, parenting and language courses.

So far Ms. Kelly said she has sold about 100 candles. Her goal is to raise at least \$10,000 before she donates the money to Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier's CDS Military Families Fund, which was launched in April and has since raised over \$100,000 in donations.()

Afghanistan battle kills more than 100; NATO troops forced to respond to biggest Taliban offensive of year

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: World

PAGE: A3

SOURCE: Our Wire Services

WORD COUNT: 485

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – More than 100 people including militants, civilians, and police have been killed in a fierce three–day battle between NATO troops and insurgents, Afghan officials said Monday, while U.S.–led coalition jets bombed a suspected al–Qaida compound, killing seven boys and several fighters.

Afghanistan has seen a sharp spike in violence the last several days, leading to a mounting number of civilian casualties – deaths and injuries sapping support for foreign troops and the government of President Hamid Karzai.

But in the south, in Uruzgan province, the Taliban launched what appears to be their biggest mass offensive of the year, forcing NATO troops to respond.

Dutch military officials said hundreds of Taliban fighters have attacked police posts en masse, sparking a three–day battle officials said was still continuing.

The mass attack appeared to be a change in strategy by the insurgents, who have been relying on an increasing number of suicide and roadside bombings so far this year.

Maj.–Gen. Jouke Eikelboom, director of operations with the Dutch military, said Karzai and the Uruzgan governor had asked for military support after several hundred Taliban fighters attacked the district of Chora.

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"I have talked to President Karzai and asked him to send helicopters to ferry the wounded to Kabul," said Mullah Ahmadullah Khan, the head of Uruzgan's provincial council, who estimated the clashes in Chora had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

Canada has about 2,500 troops operating mainly in Kandahar province. There have been no reports of any involvement in the fighting elsewhere.

To the east, in Paktika province, U.S.–coalition warplanes targeted a compound Sunday that also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys ages 10 to 16. Paktika Gov. Akram Akhpelwak said there normally is strong co–ordination between the government and international forces but said he was not told of the missile strike beforehand.

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Authorities are working with foreign forces "to have better co-ordination and to not have these misunderstandings, but today we had a misunderstanding and the people will be unhappy," Akhpelwak said by telephone. "We will go to the area and discuss the issue with the people and apologize to the people."

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," said Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman. He accused the militants of not letting the children leave the compound.

"If we knew that there were children inside the building, there was no way that that air strike would have occurred," said Sgt. 1st Class Dean Welch, another coalition spokesman.

Committee: Debate needed on extending mission

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A3

WORD COUNT: 144

OTTAWA (CP) – The House of Commons defence committee says the conflict in Afghanistan will likely go on well past 2009 and Parliament should hold a debate halfway through next year to decide whether to extend Canada's mission in the war–torn country.

The all–party committee's long–awaited reported was tabled on Monday.

"If we leave, someone else will have to carry the load," it said.

A recent poll found a majority of Canadians wanted to see the army's combat mission end on schedule in February 2009.

"Critics of the mission have said it is unbalanced and that more diplomatic and development effort is required – and less combat operations," said the committee's report.

""Nearly everyone we met, including military commanders, said more development was needed, but they pointed out that until an adequate degree of security existed, development aid could not flow to the degree desired."

Both the Bloc Quebecois and the New Democrats wrote dissenting reports, with the NDP arguing for an immediate withdrawal of troops from combat operations.

Afghanistan battle kills more than 100; Taliban's offensive biggest of year

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: World

PAGE: A3

SOURCE: Our Wire Services

WORD COUNT: 311

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Burial stipend doubled for military families

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A3

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Murray Brewster

WORD COUNT: 480

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Hillier also telephoned the Dinning family to apologize for not dealing with their concerns sooner.

"He said that now there is a centralized claim centre, whereas before each base commander handled the families' bills," said Lincoln Dinning, in an interview from his Wingham, Ont., home.

"We're glad we went public because we know that it will definitely help other families."

The RCMP policy, on which National Defence based its new schedule, was last updated in November 2006 and a spokeswoman said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies all of their funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current."

Liberal MP Dan McTeague said giving military families the same consideration as those with the RCMP was long overdue.

"It shouldn't take The Canadian Press to have raised this issue," he said. "This was a glaring omission and the reality has been that it's only been through the anguish of families that these matters are brought to public attention."

Canadian gatekeepers at Kandahar base sift friends from foes among visitors

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B7

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 355

Canadian soldiers who have been manning a key entrance to the main coalition base at Kandahar Airfield say they have learned a lot from the 1,500 Afghans who pass through the gates each day.

And they've taught them a few things too.

"We found that they've been working with us so long, we've been adapting some of their culture, they've been taking a lot of ours too," said Cpl. Justin Smith, 22, from Windsor, N.S.

"A lot of our mannerisms they've been picking up, like giving us the thumbs up. They are a lot more tolerant than most people think."

The cultural connection happens against the unlikely backdrop of gun towers and rolls of barbed wire near Entry Control Point Three – ECP3 in military parlance.

It is the entry point for every person and item coming into Kandahar Airfield, home base for thousands of soldiers from around the world fighting insurgents in Afghanistan.

This platoon of Canadians have manned ECP3 through the hail, heat and dust of the last seven months. Now they are just under a week shy of completing their tour of duty in Kandahar.

More than 300 trucks rumble and belch their way each day through bomb-sniffing dogs and a giant X-ray machine before their cargo – from building supplies to Whoppers for the Burger King on base – is allowed in.

Their drivers and the day labourers coming onto the base must snake through a separate entrance, presenting three or four times one of the coloured passes that dictate how much access to the grounds they can have.

A line winds around wooden fence posts. There's a separate section for the trusted agents and the 'Grandpas.'

"They call the elders Baba or Grandpa. If a guy jumps in the line, they'll club him, but they'll push the Grandpas to the front of the line," said Warrant Officer Chris Saunders, 36, the senior non-commissioned officer second-in-command at ECP3.

To show deference to Afghan culture, the soldiers decided to allow the elders to have their own queue.

The challenge was how to pick a cut-off age.

"A lot of these Afghans from the villages: they've had a hard life. They age quickly," said Saunders.

"I picked the number: they at least had to be older than me so it's 1965 or before, or you're not a Grandpa."

Two gun towers stand over the entry point, while soldiers on the ground below search all local nationals coming into the camp at several points before they're allowed to go on their way.

They have to turn in cellphones, pens, batteries, mirrors – anything that can be used to communicate details of the base to the outside world.

Big battle in Uruzgan kills 100 amid violence upsurge across Afghanistan; Taliban launch what appears to be their biggest mass offensive this year

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B7

SOURCE: CP; AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: Canadian Cpl. Justin Smith, left, and Cpl. Justin Croft, search Afghan workers coming into Kandahar Air Field in Afghanistan on Monday. A group of Canadian soldiers who guard the entry and exit to the coalition base at Kandahar Air Field say they've learned a lot from the 1,500 Afghans who pass by them each day. Canadian Press photo

WORD COUNT: 372

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Military more than doubles funeral expense stipend

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A8

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 429

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Soldier injured in car crash remains in critical condition; Two-vehicle collision killed Jolene LaRade, fiancée of Pte. Peter Gregory Silvea, on leave from Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: Provincial

PAGE: A3

BYLINE: Nigel Armstrong

This photo was given to The Guardian by relatives of the late Jolene LaRade, formerly of Pictou and recently of CFB Gagetown, N.B. It shows her with Private Peter (Pete) Gregory

ILLUSTRATION: Silvea. LaRade and Silvea were vacationing on the Island when they were involved in a traffic accident near Hartsville on June 7 that claimed her life. Photo special to The Guardian

WORD COUNT: 149

Private Peter (Pete) Gregory Silvea, based at CFB Gagetown, remains in critical condition in Moncton more than 10 days after the accident on P.E.I. that claimed the life of his partner.

The accident on June 7 in Hartsville resulted in the death of Jolene LaRade, 29, who was Silvea's fiancée and passenger at the time.

Silvea, 28, is a soldier with the Canadian Forces on leave from serving in Afghanistan at the time of the accident. The couple lived in Oromocto, N.B., and came to P.E.I., heading to Cavendish for a few days of getaway.

They didn't make it. They were involved in a crash at the intersection of Route 225 and Route 13. There were no serious injuries from the other vehicle, a sport utility vehicle driven by a teenage driver with two teenage passengers.

Relatives of LaRade living in Pictou, N.S., told The Guardian Monday that Silvea remains in Moncton hospital where he awaits surgery as soon as his condition allows.

Gatekeepers of Kandahar; Canadian soldiers learn a lot from Afghans every day

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: Sports

PAGE: C6

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Stephanie Levitz

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: Canadian Cpl. Justin Smith (left) and Cpl. Justin Croftsearch Afghan workers coming into Kandahar Air Field in Afghanistan Monday. – Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 363

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Their drivers and the day labourers coming onto the base must snake through a separate entrance, presenting three or four times one of the coloured passes that dictate how much access to the grounds they can have.

A line winds around wooden fence posts. There's a separate section for the trusted agents and the 'Grandpas.'

"They call the elders Baba or Grandpa. If a guy jumps in the line, they'll club him, but they'll push the Grandpas to the front of the line," said Warrant Officer Chris Saunders, 36, the senior non-commissioned officer second-in-command at ECP3.

To show deference to Afghan culture, the soldiers decided to allow the elders to have their own queue.

The challenge was how to pick a cut-off age.

"A lot of these Afghans from the villages, they've had a hard life. They age quickly," said Saunders.

"I picked the number: they at least had to be older than me so it's 1965 or before, or you're not a Grandpa."

Two gun towers stand over the entry point, while soldiers on the ground below search all local nationals coming into the camp at several points before they're allowed to go on their way.

They have to turn in cellphones, pens, batteries, mirrors – anything that can be used to communicate details of the base to the outside world.

It's an arduous task. Clearing the truck bays can take hours and the personnel searches longer still.

Big battle in Afghanistan continues; Officials ask for military support after three–days of violence

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.06.19

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: The Canadian Press; The Associated Press

BYLINE: Noor Khan

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: Killing continues in Kabul, Afghanistan, as buses and buildings are destroyed in one of the deadliest attacks in the Afghan capital since the fall of the Taliban. – Photo by The Associated Press

WORD COUNT: 463

More than 100 people including militants, civilians, and police have been killed in a fierce three–day battle between NATO troops and insurgents, Afghan officials said Monday, while U.S.–led coalition jets bombed a suspected al–Qaida compound, killing seven boys and several fighters.

Afghanistan has seen a sharp spike in violence the last several days, leading to a mounting number of civilian casualties – deaths and injuries sapping support for foreign troops and the government of President Hamid Karzai.

But in the south, in Uruzgan province, the Taliban launched what appears to be their biggest mass offensive of the year, forcing NATO troops to respond.

Dutch military officials said hundreds of Taliban fighters have attacked police posts en masse, sparking a three–day battle officials said was continuing.

The mass attack appeared to be a change in strategy by the insurgents, who have been relying on an increasing number of suicide and roadside bombings so far this year.

Maj.–Gen. Jouke Eikelboom, director of operations with the Dutch military, said Karzai and the Uruzgan governor had asked for military support after several hundred Taliban fighters attacked the district of Chora.

Precise casualty figures were not immediately available because of the continued fighting, though two Afghan officials said more than 100 people had been killed, including at least 16 police. Afghan officials said Taliban fighters sought shelter in civilian homes and that NATO bombers later targeted them. One wounded man at the main Uruzgan hospital told The Associated Press 18 members of his family had been killed.

"I have talked to President Karzai and asked him to send helicopters to ferry the wounded to Kabul," said Mullah Ahmadullah Khan, the head of Uruzgan's provincial council, who estimated the clashes in Chora had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

Canada has about 2,500 troops operating mainly in Kandahar province. There have been no reports of any involvement in the fighting elsewhere.

To the east, in Paktika province, U.S.–coalition warplanes targeted a compound Sunday that also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys ages 10 to 16. Paktika Gov.

Akram Akhpelwak said there normally is strong co-ordination between the government and international forces, but said he was not told of the missile strike beforehand.

Authorities are working with foreign forces "to have better co-ordination and to not have these misunderstandings, but today we had a misunderstanding and the people will be unhappy," Akhpelwak said by telephone. "We will go to the area and discuss the issue with the people and apologize to the people."

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," said Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman. He accused the militants of not letting the children leave the compound.

35 killed, 52 wounded in bomb attack on police bus in Afghan capital

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 881

KABUL (AP-CP) _ The deadliest insurgent attack since the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 destroyed a bus full of police instructors at Kabul's busiest transportation hub Sunday, killing 35 people and wounding 52, officials said. The Taliban has claimed responsibility.

Meanwhile, U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a compound suspected of housing al-Qaida militants in eastern Afghanistan, killing seven children and several militants, a coalition statement said Monday.

The strikes, which had the support of Afghan troops, was launched Sunday on a compound that also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic school, in the Zarghun Shah district of Paktika province, the statement said.

Sunday's enormous suicide blast, which raised the spectre of an increase in Iraq-style bombings with heavy casualties, was at least the fourth attack against a bus carrying Afghan police or army soldiers in Kabul in the past year. The blast sheared off the vehicle's metal sidings and roof, leaving a charred frame.

"Never in my life have I heard such a sound," said Ali Jawad, a 48-year-old who was selling phone cards nearby. "A big fireball followed. I saw blood and a decapitated man thrown out of the bus."

The explosion was the fifth suicide attack in Afghanistan in three days, part of a sharp spike in violence around the country. In the south, in Kandahar province, a roadside bomb killed three members of the U.S.-led coalition and an Afghan interpreter. The soldiers' nationalities were not released.

Condemning the Kabul attack, President Hamid Karzai said the "enemies of Afghanistan" were trying to stop the development of Afghan security forces, a key component in the U.S.-NATO strategy of handing over security responsibilities to the Afghan government one day, allowing western forces to leave.

A self-described Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, said a Taliban suicide bomber named Mullah Asim Abdul Rahman caused the blast. Ahmadi called an Associated Press reporter from an undisclosed location. His claim could not be verified.

Zemeri Bashary, the spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said late Sunday that 35 were killed and 52 wounded in the blast. Karzai's office said 22 police instructors died, indicating that 13 of the dead were civilians.

At least one person survived the 8:10 a.m. bus blast. Nasir Ahmad, 22, a janitor at the police training academy, was sitting in the back of the bus when the bomb exploded. Speaking from a hospital bed where he was recovering from wounds to his face and hands, he said: "There were between 30 to 40 police instructors in the bus."

It was the only full sentence he managed to utter before stopping from exhaustion.

At the entrance to the hospital, a blue plastic trash can overflowed with the bloodied shoes and sandals of victims.

Interior Minister Zarar Ahmad Muqbal said initial indications were that a suicide bomber boarded the bus as it stopped to pick up police instructors at an open-air bus station in central Kabul. Such a suicide attack would represent a sizable jump in lethality compared to more typical Taliban suicide bombings, which often kill far fewer people.

Canadian Ambassador Arif Lalani condemned the attack and reaffirmed Ottawa's commitment to the vision of a stable, democratic and economically viable Afghanistan.

“Those who reject that vision will stop at nothing to try to thwart the efforts of the Afghan people and the international community to realize it,” he said in a statement.

“I condemn, in the strongest terms, the recent violence against students and teachers, police trainers and journalists...”

“Canada will not be deterred by such acts, and remains committed to contributing to the achievement of the effective police service...”

Maj. John Thomas, a spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force, said it was too early to tell if Sunday's attack was a sign of more lethal bombings to come, or heavier involvement by al-Qaida. NATO commanders have long predicted a rise in suicide attacks this year.

Afghan government officials, police and army soldiers are commonly targeted by insurgents trying to bring down Karzai's government, and buses carrying Afghan police and army soldiers are common targets.

In May, a remote-control bomb hit an Afghan army bus in Kabul, killing the driver and wounding 29 people. In October, a bomb on a bicycle exploded as a police bus went by in Kabul, wounding 11. Last July, a remote-controlled bomb blew up near an Afghan army bus in downtown Kabul, wounding 39 people on board.

Police seem to be taking notice, and one officer suggested Afghans are beginning to equate police with danger rather than safety.

“We are afraid now that the police are increasingly coming under attack,” said Allah Bubani, a 22-year-old recent graduate of the police training academy who said he likely knew some of the instructors killed in the attack. “Nowadays the ordinary people are scared of the police, because they fear an attack on the force would also harm them.”

At least 307 Afghan police, army or intelligence personnel have been killed in violence so far this year through June 15, according to an AP tally of figures from the U.S., United Nations, NATO and Afghan authorities.

The European Union on Sunday took control from Germany of the western mission to train Afghan police. The EU, which will have 200 police, law enforcement and justice experts at the Kabul training centre, said the attack “does nothing to diminish our determination to maintain our support for the construction of the Afghan police force.”

Dr. Asadullah, a health worker at Jamhuriat hospital, said two Pakistanis, two Japanese and one Korean national were among those wounded Sunday.

7 school children killed in coalition air strikes on Afghan compound

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 123

KABUL (AP) _ U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a compound suspected of housing al-Qaida militants in eastern Afghanistan, killing seven children and several militants, a coalition statement said Monday.

The strike, which had the support of Afghan troops, was launched Sunday on a compound that also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic school, in the Zarghun Shah district of Paktika province, the statement said.

“Coalition forces confirmed the presence of nefarious activity occurring at the site before getting approval to conduct an air strike on the location,” it added.

“We are saddened by the innocent lives that were lost as a result of militants' cowardice,” Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman, said.

“This is another example of al-Qaida using the protective status of a mosque, as well as innocent civilians, to shield themselves.”

Military more than doubles funeral expense stipend for soldiers' families

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 591

OTTAWA (CP) _ Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan will now be treated the same as fallen RCMP officers when it comes to their funerals.

The Defence Department quietly confirmed Monday that it has more than doubled the burial stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty, bringing the military in line with support the Mounties offer members.

The new rate of \$12,700 came into effect June 1 amid an uproar over unpaid funeral expenses, but will be retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began its involvement in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001.

It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised. Several families of members killed in Afghanistan and elsewhere were forced to make up the difference between the funeral stipend and the actual burial cost.

In late May, The Canadian Press documented three cases of relatives coming up short _ reports Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor initially dismissed. Angered by the brush-off, the parents of one fallen soldier, Cpl. Matthew Dinning, came forward at a news conference on Parliament Hill to outline how they had asked for reimbursement twice in the year since their son had been killed.

A request for an interview with O'Connor was declined Monday, but a spokeswoman emphasized the increase that the federal Treasury Board finally approved was something the minister had been seeking for many months.

"We got what we asked for," said Isabelle Bouchard.

The new benefits package also pays for items not previously covered, such as obituary notices, flowers and receptions following the service.

Bouchard said defence staff modeled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty. Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan and a handful of others have died in training accidents.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier directed the military's casualty support centre to write to the families of Canadians who've died since 2001 to ensure they submit claims for the items that had not been previously covered and to verify whether they, too, suffered a shortfall.

Hillier also telephoned the Dinning family to apologize for not dealing with their concerns sooner.

"He said that now there is a centralized claim centre, whereas before each base commander handled the families' bills," said Lincoln Dinning, in an interview from his Wingham, Ont., home.

“We're glad we went public because we know that it will definitely help other families.”

The RCMP policy, on which National Defence based its new schedule, was last updated in November 2006 and a spokeswoman said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies all of their funeral expenses so the force can “ensure that the policy is kept current.”

Liberal MP Dan McTeague said giving military families the same consideration as those with the RCMP was long overdue.

“It shouldn't take The Canadian Press to have raised this issue,” he said.

“This was a glaring omission and the reality has been that it's only been through the anguish of families that these matters are brought to public attention.”

Privately Conservatives have been seething with frustration that they have borne the brunt of public embarrassment, saying the Liberals were in power for most of the last eight years. They've charged that the neglect of the Forces extends well beyond equipment issues to include the complex network of social benefits.

But McTeague countered that the issue of supporting troops in wartime goes beyond politics and when confronted with questions and concerns, the Tories have chosen to deny and play down shortcomings.

“Look at the issue of danger pay for wounded soldiers,” he said.

Whenever a soldier is badly wounded and evacuated from Afghanistan, they lose their deployment bonus. Last fall, the military was forced to cobble together a replacement allowance after a public outcry.

Pentagon sends decks of archeological cards to troops in Iraq, Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 274

WASHINGTON (AP) _ The Pentagon is sending another deck of playing cards to troops in Iraq, this time showing some of the country's most precious archeological sites instead of the most-wanted people.

Some 40,000 new decks of playing cards will be sent to troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Laurie Rush, an archeologist at Fort Drum in New York, says it's part of an awareness program to encourage troops to help preserve the heritage of those countries.

It's aimed at making troops aware they shouldn't pick up and bring home artifacts and also to avoid causing damage to sites.

In one incident after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, U.S. troops built a helicopter pad on the ruins of Babylon and filled their sandbags with archeological fragments from the ancient city.

Each card in the deck shows an artifact or site or gives a tip on how to help preserve antiquities.

“Drive around, not over, archeological sites,” says the five of clubs.

“This site has survived 17 centuries. Will it and others survive you?” asks the seven of clubs, which pictures Ctesiphon Arch in Iraq.

The majority of cards are about Iraq, but some shows sites in Afghanistan. The king of diamonds shows Buddha statuary at Hadda.

In another program, U.S. pilots have received training in recognizing and identifying ruins, cemeteries and other sites so they don't accidentally bomb them.

In another, soldiers are simulating incidents such as practising what they would do if they were taking hostile fire from within an archeological ruin.

“Obviously we have to put our soldiers safety first,” Rush said. But they would consider whether there might be a way to return fire without harming the site.

The military sent a 55-card deck to troops Iraq in 2003 with pictures and information about the most-wanted former senior government officials, distributing them to thousands of U.S. troops in the field to help them recognize and find the officials.

The Archaeological Institute of America reported on the program in the July–August issue of its magazine.

On the Net:

Archaeological Institute of America: <http://www.archaeology.org/0707/trenches/solitaire.html>

ABC News says Afghan suicide squads heading for Canada, other countries

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 139

WASHINGTON (CP) _ There's a report that large teams of newly-trained suicide bombers are being sent from Afghanistan to Canada, the United States and other countries.

ABC News is reporting the recruits were introduced at an al-Qaida/Taliban training camp graduation ceremony in Afghanistan earlier this month.

According to the network, a Pakistani journalist was invited to attend and take pictures as some 300 recruits, including boys as young as 12, were supposedly sent off on their suicide missions.

There was no independent confirmation of the report.

But the network has posted a video on its website, which it says shows Taliban military commander Mansoor Dadullah introducing and congratulating each team as they stood.

Dadaullah's brother was killed by U.S. forces last month.

ABC quoted Dadaullah as saying, "These Americans, Canadians, British and Germans come here to Afghanistan from faraway places. Why shouldn't we go after them?"

The report comes at a time when resurgent Taliban fighters are stepping up attacks on coalition and Afghan forces inside the country.

--Thirteenth NewsWatch--

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 331

Authorities in Britain say Canadian police sparked an investigation that busted up an international pedophile ring.

British officials say the international probe began after Canadian officials, conducting their own investigation, tipped off authorities in London about a possible British link.

Then British police, aided by Canadian, U-S and other authorities, smashed the ring.

More than 700 suspects worldwide are under investigation or arrested, and 31 children were rescued.

Toronto police say 24 people have been arrested in Canada since late 2005 — and seven children have been rescued. (13)

(Afghan-Cda-Funerals) (Audio: p07)

After some embarrassing stories from families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan, the Defence Department is going to pay more for funerals.

The new rate of 12-thousand, 700 dollars will apply to all service members killed since the country began its involvement in Afghanistan in October 2001.

That's more than double the old rate.

Last month, a controversy erupted in the House of Commons when it was revealed that some families had to pay out-of-pocket for some burial expenses. (13)

(Day-RCMP) (Audio: p05)

Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day say he doesn't need a public inquiry to decide how to handle the R-C-M-P pension mess.

He says the Conservative government cannot wait years for a public inquiry to report.

Day has ordered the formation of a task force today that will examine the structure of the national police.

The review is expected to be finished by December.

The announcement of a task force comes on the heels of a special investigator's finding that the Mounties' internal management structure is ``horribly broken." (13)

(Black Trial)

Former media mogul Conrad Black watched without any sign of emotion as a prosecutor began closing

arguments at his Chicago fraud trial today.

Assistant U-S Attorney Julie Ruder told jurors Black and three co-defendants systematically stole 60 (m) million dollars (U-S) from shareholders.

Ruder said the four didn't make a mistake -- they decided on their own to take a slice of the company's profits.

Black and his co-defendants deny they did anything illegal. (13)

(Cost-Of-Living)

Toronto might not be the best choice if you're looking for a place to live in Canada on a budget.

The Mercer Human Resource Consulting survey says Toronto is the most expensive city in Canada in which to live.

Ottawa, on the other hand, is a bargain for a major city.

The survey actually looked at 142 cities around the world.

The good news is overall, the cost of living in Canada is cheap compared to Europe.

The survey looked at costs on everything from a loaf of bread and a litre of milk to the cost of a movie ticket. (13)

(No-Touching Rule)

They're not very touchy-feely in the school system of Vienna, Virginia.

In fact one 13-year-old boy was punished after he hugged his sweetheart in the school cafeteria of one middle school.

Hal Beaulieu was sent to detention.

Now his parents want the rule to be reviewed.

School authorities say the rule was mainly meant to stop gang-style handshakes. (13)

(NewsWatch by Roger Ward)

INDEX:Defence, International, Social

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 126

OTTAWA – The Defence Department has more than doubled the funeral stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty.

The new rate of \$12,700 will apply to all service members killed since the country began its involvement in Afghanistan in October 2001.

Last month, a controversy erupted in the House of Commons when it was revealed that some families had to pay out-of-pocket for some burial expenses.

A spokeswoman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor says the new death benefits program is also more flexible, picking up costs for things such as obituaries, flowers and receptions – items that until this point had not been covered.

Isabelle Bouchard says defence staff tried to model the new benefits package on what the RCMP provides for its for officers and their families.

The old military rate of \$4675 had not been revised since 1999.

(BN)

Failed Nations

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 127

WASHINGTON — A private survey finds Sudan and seven other sub-Saharan African countries are among the ten nations in the world most vulnerable to violent internal conflict and deteriorating conditions.

Iraq and Afghanistan also make the list.

In the third annual "failed state" index, analysts for Foreign Policy magazine and the Fund for Peace say Sudan is most at risk of failure because of violence in the Darfur region, which is also spilling into the Central African Republic and Chad.

The five other most vulnerable African nations are Somalia, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea.

The only non-African states on the list are Iraq, second only to Sudan, and Afghanistan, ranked eighth.

The report says their presence shows that (b) billions of dollars in aid may be futile without a functioning government, trustworthy leaders and realistic planning.

(AP)

SAF

INDEX:Defence, International

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 119

WASHINGTON – The Pentagon is sending another deck of playing cards to troops in Iraq, this time showing some of the country's most precious archeological sites instead of the most-wanted people.

Some 40,000 new decks of playing cards will be sent to troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Laurie Rush, an archeologist at Fort Drum in New York, says it's part of an awareness program to encourage troops to help preserve the heritage of those countries.

It's aimed at making troops aware they shouldn't pick up and bring home artifacts and also to avoid causing damage to sites.

In one incident after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, U.S. troops built a helicopter pad on the ruins of Babylon and filled their sandbags with archeological fragments from the ancient city.

Each card in the deck shows an artifact or site or gives a tip on how to help preserve antiquities.

(AP)

Afghan–Air–Strike

DATE: 2007.06.18

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 84

KABUL — Seven school children have died in coalition air strikes on a compound suspected of housing al–Qaida militants in eastern Afghanistan.

The children were attending an Islamic school in the compound, which also contained a mosque.

The attack happened in Paktika province yesterday.

The coalition has blamed al–Qaida for causing the loss of innocent lives.

It says the militants were using the mosque and civilians to shield themselves.

The air strikes came hours after a suicide bombing left at least 35 police instructors dead in the capital, Kabul.

The Taliban have claimed responsibility for that attack, which also injured 52 people.

The suicide blast has raised the spectre of an increase in Iraq–style bombings with heavy casualties.

(AP)

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CP News Agenda for Tuesday, June 19

DATE: 2007.06.18
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 1421

3:10 p.m. ET: x–denotes CP Wire, y–denotes CP Picture, z–denotes CP Graphics coverage. Copy from other events based on merit and availability. All times local unless otherwise noted. Queries about these events and stories in the CP report should be directed to the departments listed below (all phone numbers 416 area code): Main Desk (National News) 507–2150 World Desk 507–2165 Sports Desk 507–2154 Ontario Desk 507–2159 Photo Desk 507–2169 Specials Desk (Syndicated Copy) 507–2152 Communications Desk (Technical Trouble) 507–2099 or 800–268–8149 WORLD

BUFFALO, N.Y. _ Anti-abortion extremist James Kopp to be sentenced on federal charges related to shooting of Dr. Barnett Slepian.

ATLANTIC

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. _ Annual conference of the Newfoundland Ocean Industries Association. Through June 22. (St. John's Convention Centre and Mile One Centre)

HALIFAX _ About 150 delegates from the North American energy industry discuss the future of energy. Through June 19. (Casino Nova Scotia and Harbourfront Marriott Hotel)

QUEBEC

ST-HYACINTHE, Que. _ Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe meets with local media. Restaurant Le Parvis, 1295 Girouard Ouest, St-Hyacinthe (9:30a); takes part in golf tournament. 5055 Saint-Pierre Ouest. (Noon).

OTTAWA

OTTAWA _ Coroner's inquest into death of Robert Hatton, who died June 8, 2003, at the General Campus of the Ottawa Hospital following a transfer from the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. Through June 22. (9:30 a.m. at Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, 160 Elgin St., 11th floor)

OTTAWA _ Air India Inquiry hold public hearings. (9:30 a.m. at Old City Hall, 111 Sussex Dr.)

xy-OTTAWA _ Daily question period. (2:15 p.m. at House of Commons, Centre Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Public Policy Forum hosts lecture by Jeffrey Gandz on leadership talent: identifying it and developing it. (7:30 a.m. at Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., 15th floor)

OTTAWA _ Commons foreign affairs committee meets in camera. Subject to change without notice. (9 a.m. at Room 701, La Promenade Building)

OTTAWA _ Commons justice committee hears witnesses on Bill C-32: impaired driving. Subject to change without notice. (9 a.m. at Room 209, West Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons access–ethics committee hears witnesses on internal report on Afghanistan. Subject to change without notice. (9 a.m. at Room 237–C, Centre Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons heritage committee hears witnesses on National Film Board appointment of Tom Perlmutter to government film commissioner. Subject to change without notice. (9 a.m. at Room 253–D, Centre Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons languages committee hears witnesses on court challenges program. Subject to change without notice. (9 a.m. at Room 371, West Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons aboriginal affairs committee meets. Subject to change without notice. (11 a.m. at Room 371, West Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons environment committee meets. Subject to change without notice. (11 a.m. at Room 253–D, Centre Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons immigration committee meets. Subject to change without notice. (11 a.m. at Room 308, West Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons fisheries committee hears witnesses on Bill S–220: heritage lighthouses. Subject to change without notice. (11 a.m. at Room 536, Wellington Building)

OTTAWA _ Commons public safety committee hears witnesses on agri–chemicals and agri–retail security. Subject to change without notice. (11 a.m. at Room 269, West Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons trade committee meets in camera. Subject to change without notice. (11 a.m. at Room 705, La Promenade Building)

OTTAWA _ Commons estimates committee meets in camera. Subject to change without notice. (3:30 p.m. at Room 269, West Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons human resources committee meets in camera. Subject to change without notice. (3:30 p.m. at Room 237–C, Centre Block, Parliament Hill)

OTTAWA _ Commons agriculture committee meets in camera. Subject to change without notice. (3:30 p.m. at Room 701, La Promenade Building)

OTTAWA _ Commons status of women committee meets. Subject to change without notice. (3:30 p.m. at Room 308, West Block, Parliament Hill)

CHELSEA, Que. _ Finance Minister Jim Flaherty meets with provincial and territorial responsible for securities and finance. Through June 20. (Willson House, 654 Meech Lake Rd.)

ONTARIO

GUELPH, Ont. _ Health and Long–Term Care Minister George Smitherman makes announcement about accessing community–based health care services in the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) area. He will be joined by local MPP Liz Sandals. (1 p.m. at Guelph Medical Place, Main Floor Vestibule, 83 Dawson Rd.)

GUELPH, Ont. _ Guelph Sexuality Conference, Canada's largest and longest–running sexual health forum. Theme of this year's conference is "Human Rights and Sexual Health: Implications for Education and

Service." Through June 20. (University of Guelph)

HAMILTON _ Leading policy experts, including Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, gather to address global energy security and its environmental, economic and societal implications at three-day conference, Energy2100: Global Perspectives on a Sustainable Future. Through June 20. (8 a.m. at Hamilton Convention Centre, 1 Summers Lane)

KINGSTON, Ont. _ Former NHL agent David Frost appears on fraud charges for allegedly using Mike Danton's credit card to buy gas. (5 Court St.)

LONDON, Ont. _ Regional Conference on Wind Energy Development. Through June 20. (London Convention Centre)

NIAGARA FALLS, Ont. _ Ontario Nurses' Association members from across the province gather for meeting. Through June 20. (Sheraton on the Falls Hotel, 5875 Falls Ave.)

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. _ Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Jim Bradley, MPP for St. Catharines will be joined by Bill George Jr., Chair of the Grape Growers of Ontario to make financial assistance announcement. (12 p.m. at Whitty Farms, 2071 First Street Louth)

THUNDER BAY, Ont. _ Construction Sector Council holds conference to release forecast on Ontario's need to meet rising demand for construction workers. (10 a.m. at Valhalla Inn, Viking Room, 1 Valhalla Inn Rd.)

TORONTO _ Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging and Technology. For itineraries and more details, go to www.ficcdat.com. Through June 19.

TORONTO _ Michael (Pinball) Clemons, coach of Toronto Argonauts and chairman of Youth Challenge Fund, announces fund's latest round of investments and donations. Education Minister Kathleen Wynne and Children and Youth Services Minister Mary Anne Chambers to attend. (9:30 a.m. at Firgrove Recreation Centre, 5 Needle Firway)

TORONTO _ Lieut.-Gov. James Bartleman speaks at reception celebrating Ontario recipients of the 2007 Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation Excellence Awards. (9:30 a.m. at Liberty Grand, Governor's Room, Exhibition Place, 25 British Columbia Rd.)

TORONTO _ His excellency Pavel Vosalik, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Canada, will introduce himself to James K. Bartleman, Ontario's Lieutenant Governor. Photo ID required. (11:30 a.m. at Room 131, Legislative Building, Queen's Park)

TORONTO _ Toronto City Councillor Paula Fletcher knocks down replica of Nanticoke Generating Station as part of an Ontario Clean Air Alliance campaign. (12:30 p.m. at Yonge-Dundas Square)

TORONTO _ Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party, hosts a Pride Week meet and greet. Followed by a fundraising dinner at Jamie Kennedy's Wine Bar, 9 Church St. at 7 p.m. (5 p.m. at Byzantium Restaurant, 499 Church St.)

TORONTO _ Official opening of McMurtry Gardens of Justice, named in honour on Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry. (6 p.m. at 361 University Ave., outside entrance)

x-TORONTO _ The 'True Colors' tour comes to Toronto with performers Cyndi Lauper, Debbie Harry and Erasure. (6 p.m.)

TORONTO _ Biennial Environment and Energy Conference focusing on the future of the Great Lakes region. Environment Minister Laurel Broten and Energy Minister Dwight Duncan to attend. Go to www.eeco2007.com for more details. Through June 20. (Metro Toronto Convention Centre)

PRAIRIES

EDMONTON _ Alberta's Automobile Insurance Rate Board holds its annual review of mandatory premiums. (9 a.m. at Delta Edmonton Centre Suite Hotel, 1022–102 St.)

MEDICINE HAT, Alta. _ Review of Alberta's royalty rates. (9 a.m. at Medicine Hat College, 299 College Drive SE)

MEDICINE HAT, Alta. _ First-degree murder trial for girl charged with killing her parents and eight-year-old brother. Through July 13. (10 a.m.)

MEDICINE HAT, Alta. _ Court case resumes for 16-year-old girl charged with accessory-to-murder in the triple homicide in Medicine Hat.

x-WINNIPEG _ Bishops, priests and lay people from across Canada gather for a meeting of the Anglican General Synod, the highest governing body of the Anglican Church of Canada. Included on the agenda are the election of a new national leader and a debate on the controversial issue of blessing same-sex unions. Through June 25.

PRINCE ALBERT, Sask. _ Female high school teacher charged with sexually exploiting a 14-year-old female student expected to enter a plea.

SASKATOON _ Sentencing will take place for Curtis Bear, who was convicted of impaired driving causing death in the 2003 death of Tanya Bergen.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

x-NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C. _ Murder trial of accused serial killer Robert Pickton (10 a.m. at B.C. Supreme Court)

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. _ Coroner Tom Pawlowski heads inquest into death of logging truck driver Frank Leroux on forestry road near Mackenzie in March 2006. Through June 29. (9:30 a.m. at Prince George courthouse, 250 George St.)

TERRACE, B.C. _ Coroner's inquest into death of 14-month-old Rowen Von Niederhausern who was found unresponsive while sleeping on Aug. 16, 2002. Through June 22. (9:30 a.m. at Terrace Provincial Court, 3408 Kalum St.)

NORTH

YELLOWKNIFE _ National human rights conference to be held, attracting more than 150 delegates from across Canada. Through June 19.

Macho symbols risky for Tories; Ties to hockey, army, race cars won't woo women voters to party

IDNUMBER 200706190131
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Met
SECTION: News
PAGE: A14
BYLINE: Susan Delacourt
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 629

OTTAWA

Soldiers, hockey gear and race cars are not just the stuff of young boys' wish lists any more – they're also symbols that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government is deliberately choosing to embrace.

What's puzzling some observers, however, is how all this heavily male symbolism, mixed with an aggressive, disciplinary governing style, is going to help the Conservatives get more votes in the next election, especially from women.

"It's definitely not a growth strategy. It's the opposite of a growth strategy," says pollster Nik Nanos, who says all this macho posturing may be part of the reason the federal Conservatives are stalled in the public-opinion surveys conducted in the past few months.

"It's reinforcing stereotypes that they're trying to get rid of – which is that the Conservatives appeal to a very narrow group of voters that tend to be very male and right-wing. ... They're creating their own glass ceiling."

Nanos was interviewed in the wake of a weekend photo opportunity by Conservatives in which a NASCAR race vehicle – owned and driven by Pierre Bourque, a popular Internet news blogger – was emblazoned with the Tory logo. Human Resources Minister Diane Finley, whose husband, Doug, is in charge of the next election campaign for the Tories, bluntly stated the strategy behind the NASCAR appeal.

Finley told a newspaper interviewer that NASCAR fans are "our kind of people. They're hard-working families, they're taxpayers who play by the rules. And those are the people that we're targeting."

There were already questions yesterday about how this stunt was out of sync with the Tories' bid to show themselves as environmentally sensitive – not to mention the ethics surrounding the party endorsement of a supposedly independent Internet news website.

But the appeal to "NASCAR dads," which U.S. President George W. Bush also attempted earlier this year with his own, similar photo op in the United States, opens wider questions about the government's grip on the idea of "culture" – a word that has been bandied about in other contexts in recent days.

Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day called a news conference to announce that the government was getting serious about changing the culture of the RCMP. Day talked about limits to the effectiveness of "top-down"

Macho symbols risky for Tories; Ties to hockey, army, race cars won't woo women voters to party 55

organizations and "command-and-control" structures, even though it's widely known these are vividly apt descriptions of the approach within his own cabinet and government.

They are also attributes of political culture that has been shown, in repeated studies, to turn women off the whole business of politics.

Harper also serves to underline his appreciation for old-fashioned, top-down culture every time he attaches his leadership to strong support of the military, some critics argue.

Equal Voice, a non-partisan organization devoted to increasing women's representation in politics, recently held a luncheon in Ottawa featuring Green Leader Elizabeth May, the only woman among the major party leaders right now.

There was a buzz among the mostly female audience about the scene on TV the night before, when chief of defence staff Gen. Rick Hillier appeared at the start of a hockey broadcast encouraging support for the troops in Afghanistan and, by extension, the Conservatives' backing of the mission.

Many of the women were lamenting how hockey and the military had become so entangled with the current federal government – beyond just Harper paying visits to Afghanistan and writing a hockey book in his spare time.

May said yesterday that she would characterize the current government as a "bully-boy ... It thinks nothing of hitting below the belt." And the Greens leader says that is not a personality designed to appeal to women voters.

Nanos has his own theory – he wonders if the Tories are focused more on appealing to their core, mostly male voters because they also tend to be the biggest financial donors. Nanos warns this may be wise in the short term but wonders about the long-term fallout of making the appeal so narrow.

"The thing is, you're going to have more money on the one hand, but no votes, " Nanos says.

Military boosts aid for funerals; Families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan get same support as RCMP

IDNUMBER 200706190120
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A19
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 469

Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan will now be treated the same as fallen RCMP officers when it comes to their funerals.

The defence department quietly confirmed yesterday it has more than doubled the burial stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty, bringing the military in line with support the Mounties offer members.

The new rate of \$12,700 came into effect June 1 amid an uproar over unpaid funeral expenses, but will be retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began its involvement in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001.

It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised. Several families of members killed in Afghanistan and elsewhere were forced to make up the difference between the funeral stipend and the actual burial cost.

In late May, Canadian Press documented three cases of relatives coming up short – reports Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor initially dismissed. Angered by the brush-off, the parents of one fallen soldier, Cpl. Matthew Dinning, came forward at a news conference on Parliament Hill to outline how they had asked for reimbursement twice in the year since their son had been killed.

A request for an interview with O'Connor was declined yesterday, but a spokesperson emphasized the increase that the federal Treasury Board finally approved was something the minister had been seeking for many months. "We got what we asked for," said Isabelle Bouchard.

The new benefits package also pays for items not previously covered, such as obituary notices, flowers and receptions following the service.

Bouchard said defence staff modelled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty. Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan and a handful of others have died in training accidents.

Chief of defence staff Gen. Rick Hillier directed the military's casualty support centre to write to the families of Canadians who've died since 2001 to ensure they submit claims for the items that had not been previously covered and to verify whether they, too, suffered a shortfall.

Hillier also telephoned the Dinning family to apologize for not dealing with their concerns sooner.

"He said that now there is a centralized claim centre, whereas before each base commander handled the families' bills," said Lincoln Dinning, in an interview from his Wingham, Ont., home.

"We're glad we went public because we know that it will definitely help other families."

The RCMP policy on which National Defence based its new schedule was last updated in November 2006. A spokesperson said families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies of all funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current."

Liberal MP Dan McTeague (Pickering–Scarborough East) said giving military families the same consideration as those with the RCMP was long overdue.

"This was a glaring omission and the reality has been that it's only been through the anguish of families that these matters are brought to public attention."

Global refugee totals exploding; Conflict in Iraq helped push number to nearly 10 million, UN agency report says

IDNUMBER 200706190081

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Ont

SECTION: World And Comment

PAGE: AA02

ILLUSTRATION: THAIER AL-SUDANI Reuters The latest UN data show the number of internally displaced Iraqis, like this boy in a refugee camp in Baghdad on June 10, has now topped 2 million. ;

BYLINE: Olivia Ward

SOURCE: Toronto Star

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 554

The war in Iraq has boosted world refugee totals dramatically in the past year – reversing, according to the United Nations, a steady trend toward fewer people fleeing their countries.

On the eve of World Refugee Day, figures released by the international refugee agency UNHCR show that the number of refugees under its mandate has risen by 14 per cent, to nearly 10 million. That is the highest total since 2002, after the war in Afghanistan ended.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq touched off a new cycle of flight and instability in the Middle East, even as thousands of refugees return to Afghanistan – the country that has produced the world's highest total of refugees until now.

Agency figures say 2.1 million refugees are still outside Afghanistan, and 1.5 million seeking refuge from Iraq. But while thousands of Afghans are returning home, Iraqis are leaving in record numbers, to create a crisis in neighbouring countries.

"It's a huge problem for the countries that have to absorb all those people," says Ken Bacon, president of the Washington-based advocacy group Refugees International. "Exit figures are between 30,000 and 50,000 a month. Most of the refugees have gone to Syria and Jordan."

While the number of people crossing international borders to seek safety has risen, the number of people who have been displaced inside their own countries has increased even more alarmingly.

Totals of stateless people without status or citizenship in the countries where they are living have also escalated in the past year, says the report, titled "2006 Global Trends."

"At the end of 2005, the global figure of persons of concern stood at 21 million," it says. "By the close of 2006, 32.9 million, or an increase of 56 per cent, was the figure."

The latest UN data since the end of 2006 show that internally displaced Iraqis have now topped 2 million – double the number when Saddam Hussein was in power.

After Afghans and Iraqis, the main groups of refugees under the agency's care are 686,000 Sudanese, 460,000 Somalis and about 400,000 from each of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi.

Figures do not include some 4.3 million Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian territories.

Conflicts are responsible for making millions homeless and destitute, with dire long-term consequences, says Nanda Na Champassak, spokeswoman for the UN agency's Ottawa office.

"On one hand there is relief, when people want to return home after suffering so much violence and destruction," she says, pointing out the stream of returnees heading back to African countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola. "But they often find themselves internally displaced once they return."

In Africa, new conflicts have sprung up in places like Sudan and Somalia, forcing thousands from their homes and often leaving them beyond the reach of aid. In Sudan alone, Na Champassak says, some 5 million people have been displaced by conflicts in Darfur and the south.

Many displaced people and refugees are children who are in need of long-term medical and psychological care and education, refugee officials say. For Iraqi children, the problems are especially acute.

"The situation with Iraq won't reverse itself in a year or two," says Ashley Clements, an advocacy specialist with the international charity World Vision and co-author of its report, "Trapped: the Disappearing Hopes of Iraqi Refugee Children."

"The needs are urgent and the problems may be there over decades," Clements said in a phone interview from Amman.

Iraq now ranks as the second-most unstable country in the world, after Sudan but ahead of Somalia, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan, according to the 2007 Failed State index issued yesterday by Foreign Policy magazine and the Fund for Peace.

The case for ignoring the Mideast

IDNUMBER 200706190078
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: World And Comment
PAGE: AA02
BYLINE: Richard Gwyn
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 537

Recently, the American strategic analyst Edward Luttwak tossed out an idea that, depending upon the viewpoint and bias of an observer, was either unusually perceptive or downright irresponsible, or was merely provocative.

In the May issue of the British magazine Prospect, Luttwak, who is based in Washington, advanced this argument:

The entire Middle East, he wrote, is a "backward region (that is) less relevant than ever" and "it would be better for everyone if the rest of the world learned to ignore it."

Luttwak points out that Middle East oil, while still of immense importance, is of declining importance. Its share of world oil output is less than 30 per cent compared with 40 per cent in the mid-1970s. The U.S. relies on the Middle East for only 17 per cent of its imports and aims to reduce that by three-quarters by 2025.

However, and as weakens significantly his argument, Luttwak means by the Middle East only its Arab nations, and Iran. He thus dodges the role of Israel and its supporters in keeping the world's attention focused on the Middle East, and so on Israel itself.

Moreover, his language is almost brutally harsh. He describes the Middle East as "a mostly stagnant region where almost nothing is created in science or the arts." Its people are "remarkably unproductive... (and) its biggest industries are extravagant consumption and the venting of resentment."

Yet it is impossible not to wonder if Luttwak doesn't have a point.

In many respects – the civil war in the Palestinian territories between Hamas and Fatah as only the latest example – the Middle East is not a collection of failed states but a failed region.

A 2004 United Nations report (written principally by Arab authors) found that the Middle East's literacy rate is the world's lowest but that of sub-Saharan Africa. Per capita income keeps falling. Unemployment is massive. Most governments are repressive.

And then there's the violence. That's a tame term for what's happening; a much better one would be that of the legitimization, indeed of the sanctification, of constant mass murder – in the Palestinian territories, in Lebanon, in Iraq, where Shia and Sunni are blowing up each other's mosques, and in Afghanistan, which has just suffered its worst ever suicide bombing.

Of course the blame for this is far from wholly internal. Israel, in a belated attempt to shore up moderate

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, is doing now what it should have done long ago – releasing Palestinian tax revenues that it collected and easing some of the suffocating checkpoints in the West Bank.

The U.S. military occupation of Iraq has been a black role model of incompetence and arrogance. The "surge" of additional troops has produced nothing but higher American and Iraqi casualties.

But the Mideast is the property of its own people. And it's been reduced, with their at least tacit consent, to a kind of flaming desert – savage, fanatical, anarchic.

Some day, this rage will burn out. At some point, ordinary people will decide that getting on with ordinary daily life is more important than ideology or fundamentalist causes or historical rights and wrongs.

Luttwak concludes that "backward societies must be left alone."

That's a pretty brutal conclusion. But until the people of the Middle East themselves decide that they want to rejoin the rest of the world, the best that the rest of the world may be able to do is to wait for the people there to achieve that moment of real liberation.

Richard Gwyn usually appears on Tuesdays. Contact him at

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Air strike kills 7 Afghan children; Taliban warn of sending bombers to Canada and U.S.: Report

IDNUMBER 200706190074
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Met
SECTION: World And Comment
PAGE: AA05
BYLINE: Sayed Salahuddin
SOURCE: ; REUTERS NEWS AGENCY
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 253

At least seven children were killed in a U.S.-led coalition air strike on a religious school in Afghanistan, the coalition said, amid rising anger over civilian deaths from foreign military operations.

Up to 60 civilians have been killed in the past three days in the southern Uruzgan province alone, a senior provincial official said.

Some 50 Taliban and Afghan forces were also killed in the battles in Chora district of the rugged province, said the head of the provincial council, Mawlavi Hamdullah.

A NATO spokesperson in Kabul, Maj. John Thomas, said he knew that a large number of "insurgents" were killed in the battle in the district but said he was aware of only 11 civilians being wounded.

Earlier yesterday, the U.S.-led coalition force apologized for the deaths of the children at a madrassa in southeastern Paktia province on the weekend but said they had no idea children were present when the premises were attacked.

The statement said children who survived Sunday's raid said insurgents had forced pupils to stay inside the madrassa. The White House accused the Taliban of using human shields.

Meanwhile, ABC News reports that large teams of newly trained suicide bombers are being sent from Afghanistan to Canada, the United States and other countries.

The network reports the recruits were introduced at an Al Qaeda/Taliban training camp graduation ceremony in Afghanistan this month. ABC says a Pakistani journalist was invited to attend and take pictures as some 300 recruits, including boys as young as 12, were supposedly sent on their missions.

But the network has posted a video on its website, which it says shows Taliban military commander Mansoor Dadullah congratulating each team as they stood.

From the Star's wire services

Canadian found guilty in Dubai; Vancouver drug worker sentenced to four years

IDNUMBER 200706190116
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: UNITED NATIONS
BYLINE: Steven Edwards
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 322

UNITED NATIONS — A Dubai court found Canadian anti-narcotics worker Bert Tatham guilty today on drug possession charges, sentencing him to four years in prison in the Arab emirate.

Barring any successful appeal, the Vancouver resident's main hope for early release is to be included in one of Dubai's periodic amnesties for selected offenders.

From their Collingwood, Ont., home, Tatham's parents, Louise and Charlie, vowed to seek stepped-up help from the Canadian government to achieve at least that.

In Victoria, Tatham's bride-to-be, Sara Gilmer, said she hoped for his fastest possible return. "It's what I feared. I'm so disappointed," she said.

Dubai authorities arrested Tatham on April 23 as he entered the emirate after completing the first leg of his return trip to Canada from Afghanistan, where he had worked the previous 12 months helping farmers find alternatives to poppy cultivation.

He admitted he knew he was carrying dried poppy flowers — which he planned to use as props during lectures — but Dubai customs authorities also said they found him in possession of 0.6 grams of hashish.

The court's three-judge panel delivered their verdict after his defence lawyers argued at trial last week that the peculiarities in his work in Afghanistan — where he had been involved in handling large amounts of hashish — explained how some could have ended up in his clothes.

"We're hopeful of a good judgment after we explained everything about the nature of his job," Sharif Emar, legal adviser to Tatham's lawyer, Saeed Al-Ghailani, said just ahead of the verdict.

Louise Tatham, 60, said yesterday that "all this trouble" could have been avoided if her son had listened to her and abandoned his plan to spend a day and a half in Dubai, a common transport hub for travellers between south Asia and points west, to shop and sight-see.

"I'd told him to come straight back and to pass through Dubai, not stop off there," the mother-of-three said.

Tatham, 35, had planned to arrive April 25 at Vancouver, where Gilmer, 28, was to meet him.

Amnesties are presented as humanitarian acts in the name of Dubai's ruler, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Maktoum.

Afghan women still seen as inferior; Religious leaders impeding progress, says Kandahar official

IDNUMBER 200706190097
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 387

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — They may no longer run the government, but southern Afghanistan's influential religious leaders continue to make life painfully hard for women, says Kandahar's new director of women's affairs.

Preaching a false brand of Islam, the mullahs are helping prop up a culture that treats female members like "a piece of meat," Runa Tareen said in an outspoken interview.

She acknowledged that women in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban, have made some progress since the Islamist regime fell, especially in terms of winning renewed access to education and jobs.

However, forced marriages, unchecked domestic abuse and restrictive dress codes are still common, largely due to age-old customs and what Tareen called false messages emerging from the area's mosques.

"Everybody listens to the mullah because the mullah is the only person that everyone respects. He knows the Koran, he knows Islam," she said.

"It is up to the religious people to tell families what Islam provides for women's rights. ... But, unfortunately, they are not teaching people respect for women."

Tareen is nothing if not brave. Simply by occupying the government-appointed post, let alone chastising the powerful religious establishment, she has put herself in harm's way.

The 34-year-old assumed the job last October, 18 days after her predecessor, Safia Ahmed-jan, was assassinated just outside her home in Kandahar.

"It was very painful for us," the new director said of the widely condemned murder. "It was a great loss."

Her bodyguard asks to search a foreign reporter's satchel, noting that it was two men posing as journalists who assassinated Ahmed Shah Masood, the legendary Northern Alliance leader.

Tareen, however, is fatalistic about the risks of promoting female rights in the city where the Taliban first barred women from working outside the home, going to school, or appearing in public with their faces exposed. Muslims believe the day of their death is preordained, she said, so why fret about when that time will come?

Tareen is part of a broader effort by Afghanistan's new government to reverse the trampling of women's rights that became a hallmark of the Taliban regime.

Since 2001, girls have been readmitted to schools, and jobs, at least in government and with non-governmental organizations, are again open to women. Even this region, though among the most conservative in the country, has seen advances.

The director of Kandahar's main hospital, for instance, is a respected female surgeon.

About half of girls in Kandahar City attend school now, said Tareen, while women have a better chance of finding work outside the home.

But she added the situation is different in rural Kandahar province, with many parents still failing to see the value of educating their daughters.

U.S. military regrets deaths of Afghan children

IDNUMBER 200706190093
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
COLUMN: World Briefing
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
SOURCE: L.A. Times
WORD COUNT: 87

KABUL, Afghanistan – The U.S. military yesterday expressed regret over the deaths of seven Afghan children in an airstrike a day earlier but blamed Islamic insurgents for preventing the youngsters from leaving the compound that was hit.

American officials said U.S.-led coalition forces were unaware of the presence of noncombatants inside the compound in Paktika province, which also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic seminary.

Seven boys under the age of 16, including at least one as young as 10, were killed in Sunday's airstrike, according to officials.

Canadian convicted of drug possession; Sentenced to four years in Arab prison

IDNUMBER 200706190077
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
DATELINE: UNITED NATIONS
BYLINE: Steven Edwards
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 460

UNITED NATIONS — A Dubai court found Canadian anti-narcotics official Bert Tatham guilty today on drug possession charges, sentencing him to four years in prison in the Arab emirate.

Barring any successful appeal, the Vancouver resident's main hope for early release is to be included in one of Dubai's periodic amnesties for selected offenders.

From their Collingwood, Ontario, home, Tatham's parents, Louise and Charlie, vowed to seek stepped-up help from the Canadian government to achieve at least that.

From Victoria, B.C., Tatham's bride-to-be, Sara Gilmer, said she hoped for his fastest possible return. "It's what I feared. I'm so disappointed," she said.

Dubai authorities arrested Tatham April 23 as he entered the emirate after completing the first leg of his return trip to Canada from Afghanistan, where he had worked the previous 12 months helping farmers find alternatives to poppy cultivation.

He admitted he knew he was carrying dried poppy flowers — which he planned to use as props during lectures — but Dubai customs authorities also said they found him in possession of 0.6 grams of hashish.

Court documents say an airport investigator "suspected" Tatham as he passed through customs with other travellers, and ordered a "detail check."

They add he "found in the front right small pocket in (Tatham's) pants that he was wearing at that time a dark coloured piece suspected of being an intoxicating substance."

The documents say the substance tested to be hashish.

The court's three-judge panel delivered their verdict after his defence lawyers argued at trial last week the peculiarities in his work in Afghanistan — where he had been involved in handling large amounts of hashish — explained how some could have ended up in his clothes.

"We're hopeful of a good judgment after we explained everything about the nature of his job," Sharif Emara, legal advisor to Tatham's lawyer, Saeed Al-Ghailani, said just ahead of the verdict.

Louise, 60 said Monday "all this trouble" could have been avoided if only her son had listened to her and abandoned his plan to spend a day and a half in Dubai, a common transport hub for travellers between south Asia and points west, to shop and sight-see.

"I'd told him to come straight back and to pass through Dubai, not stop off there," the mother-of-three said.

"But he wanted to buy a gold watch ... and see the changes in the city."

Tatham, 35, had planned to arrive April 25 at Vancouver, where Gilmer, 28, was to meet him.

The couple met almost two years ago through a mutual friend, and plan to marry.

"Everyone in my life really loves Bert," Gilmer said, adding she had prepared herself for the possibility he might not be freed today.

"I'm just trying to remain positive without getting my hopes up too much," she explained early Monday. "There have been so many disappointments already with this. We all just want him home the fastest possible."

Amnesties are presented as humanitarian acts in the name of Dubai's ruler, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Maktoum.

The most recent was at the end of May for 352 offenders of "different nationalities and serving terms for various crimes and misdemeanours."

Emara speculated a new amnesty could coincide with the month-long Islamic observance of Ramadan, which this year begins September 12.

But insiders say political lobbying is sometimes required to get on the list.

U.S.-led air raid kills seven Afghan children

IDNUMBER 200706190076
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
DATELINE: KABUL
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 354

KABUL (Reuters) — At least seven children were killed in a U.S.-led coalition air strike on a religious school in Afghanistan, the coalition said on Monday, amid rising anger over civilian deaths from foreign military operations.

A U.S. military spokesman said some children who survived Sunday's raid said insurgents had forced pupils to stay inside the madrasa.

"We had surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside the building," said Army Major Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman, in a statement.

In Washington, White House spokesman Tony Snow said: "Obviously any time innocents are killed it is something that is a tragedy and certainly we grieve for those who are lost.

"We also understand that ... the Taliban and other terrorists try to transform innocents into human shields."

The air strike on the school occurred on the same day a suspected suicide bomber killed more than 20 people in an attack on a police bus in the heart of Kabul.

That attack indicated "the terrorists are certainly willing to go in and take innocent human lives," Snow said.

"It means that the terrorists are still active and we have to continue to fight them on all fronts."

Other violence around the country made Sunday one of the bloodiest days since the Taliban were driven from power in 2001.

The U.S.-led and Afghan forces killed several dozen insurgents in a "prolonged battle" in the southern province of Helmand that day, the U.S. military said on Monday.

The forces were attacked by an unknown number of guerrillas, prompting the troops to call in air support. Two coalition soldiers were wounded in the battle, it said, adding it had no report of civilian casualties.

Also on Sunday, in a separate incident, three coalition soldiers and their Afghan interpreter were killed after a roadside bomb hit their vehicle near Kandahar in the south.

A 44-year-old Dutch soldier was killed and three injured fighting with coalition forces in the nearby Chora region on the weekend, military officials announced in Amsterdam on Monday.

The air strike on the madrasa occurred in the southeastern province of Paktika near the Pakistan border.

The coalition said it had been part of an operation aimed at a compound containing a mosque and a madrasa thought to have been used as a safehouse by al Qaeda fighters.

"Witness statements taken early this morning clearly put the blame on the suspected terrorists, saying that if the children attempted to go outside they were beaten and pushed away from the door," the coalition said.

There was no immediate way of confirming the coalition claims.

War won't be won by deadline: committee

IDNUMBER 200706190072
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 430

OTTAWA — Parliament should immediately debate whether the Canadian Forces commitment to Afghanistan should be extended beyond February 2009, says a Commons defence committee study released Monday.

The all-party committee also said more needs to be done to ensure aid and reconstruction dollars are delivered in a more timely manner to Afghans, especially after some particularly heavy fighting last year.

"None of the witnesses who appeared before the committee expected the military problem in Afghanistan to be solved by February 2009," states the report, the result of a 13-month study of a controversial mission, which has divided Canadians and claimed the lives of 57 soldiers and one diplomat.

"Some spoke of decades; some spoke of generations; but all spoke of a long-term commitment. This raises the question of whether the mission mandate ought to be extended or not."

The committee recommended the government hold a debate "without delay" to give Canadians "an accurate and up-to-date understanding" of the mission and its "decision-making" around the February 2009 deadline.

That date has been a bone of contention among the four federal parties. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has strongly suggested the mission will have to be extended beyond 2009 and has criticized the opposition for calling for arbitrary withdrawal dates.

Moreover, the Forces top commander in Afghanistan recently said the military is making contingency plans beyond 2009.

The Liberals want Canada to serve notice to its NATO partners that it will give up its dangerous mission in volatile southern Afghanistan, perhaps in favour of a less violent part of the country, by 2009.

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said the Liberals pushed for an immediate debate on the future of the mission because the military needs the 18 remaining months in its current mandate to plan for the future.

"Rotation is in order," Coderre said. "We're an alliance. When a country leaves, there's a replacement." The NDP wants an immediate withdrawal of troops and reiterated that view in a dissenting opinion.

The report suggests that Canada could disappoint its allies in southern Afghanistan, which include the U.S., Britain, the Netherlands, Australia and others if it decides to leave Kandahar.

Canada contributes 2,500 of the 12,000 NATO troops in the south, the report says.

"If we leave, someone else will have to carry the load," the report states.

In another development, the Defence Department announced Monday it was more than doubling the amount of money it gives the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty to \$12,700 from the previous \$4,600.

The move follows a controversy two weeks ago after some military families disclosed they had to pay some of their own funeral expenses.

Isabelle Bouchard, spokeswoman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, said the military was working on the funeral spending increase long before it became a public controversy, and that the new guidelines are more flexible.

Ottawa Citizen

Global warming means displacement of millions

IDNUMBER 200706190037
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B10
DATELINE: BEIRUT
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 745

BEIRUT (Reuters) — If rising sea levels force the people of the Maldives to seek new homes, who will look after them in a world already turning warier of refugees?

The daunting prospect of mass population movements set off by climate change and environmental disasters poses an imminent new challenge that no one has yet figured out how to meet.

People displaced by global warming — the Christian Aid agency has predicted there will be one billion by 2050 — could dwarf the nearly 10 million refugees and almost 25 million internally displaced people already fleeing wars and oppression.

All around the world, predictable patterns are going to result in very long-term and very immediate changes in the ability of people to earn their livelihoods," said Michele Klein Solomon of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM).

"It's pretty overwhelming to see what we might be facing in the next 50 years," she said. "And it's starting now."

People forced to move by climate change, salination, rising sea levels, deforestation or desertification do not fit the classic definition of refugees — those who leave their homeland to escape persecution or conflict and who need protection.

But the world's welcome even for these people is wearing thin, just as United Nations figures show that an exodus from Iraq has reversed a five-year decline in overall refugee numbers.

Governments and aid agencies are straining to cope with the 10 million whose plight risks being obscured by debates over a far larger tide of economic migrants — and perhaps future waves of fugitives from environmental mayhem.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which marks World Refugee Day on Wednesday, says the global political climate for refugees has already become harsher.

"They used to be welcomed as people fleeing persecution, but this has been changing — certainly since 9/11, but even before then," said William Spindler, a UNHCR spokesman in Geneva.

"Growing xenophobia, intolerance, political manipulation by populist politicians who mix up the issues — the whole debate on asylum and migration has been confused," he said.

People fleeing threats at home and those seeking a better life could be in the same group washing up on a Spanish beach, but Spindler said it is vital to keep the distinction between them to provide effective protection to those who need it.

Whatever their motives, migrants deserve to be treated with dignity and as human beings, he added. "We have seen people in the Mediterranean in boats or hanging onto fishing nets for days while states discuss who should rescue them."

Before sectarian violence exploded in Iraq last year, global refugee numbers had been shrinking. The Taliban's overthrow in Afghanistan, along with peace deals in trouble-spots like Congo, Liberia, Angola and southern Sudan, had allowed millions to return home — although 2.1 million Afghans have yet to do so.

"I'm not suggesting that life is all beautiful in those countries, but there have been advances," said Joel Charny, vice-president of Washington-based Refugees International.

"The big exception is Iraq, the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world," he said. "Everyone's fleeing.

"It's really broad-based insecurity displacing people in Iraq and outside."

The UNHCR says 2.2 million Iraqis have fled abroad and over two million have left their homes inside the country, where they are much harder to track or assist than those overseas.

Around the world, nearly 25 million people are internally displaced — fleeing for the same reasons as refugees, but lacking international recognition or protection.

While Iraq and Darfur often hit the headlines, aid officials worry about the "forgotten crises" that uproot people within national borders, often far from television cameras.

"Hardly anyone is concerned about the Central African Republic," said Sarah Hughes, UK director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). "And in Chad for instance, refugees from Darfur get three times more provision than Chadian displaced."

Recognising the scale of internal population upheavals, the UNHCR last year took under its wing some 13 million displaced people, many of whom had to be reached in conflict zones.

"In Darfur, the problem is not funding but security and access to the people we are trying to help," said Spindler.

The bloodshed in Iraq has made it a virtual no-go zone for international humanitarian staff, but aid workers also grapple with violent environments anywhere from Afghanistan to Colombia.

"The biggest challenge is security, the shrinking of humanitarian space," said the IRC's Hughes.

Refugees may also feel the world has less room for them as they try to cross borders into countries where hostility to migrants of all sorts has grown, compared with the Cold War era when fugitives from communism won sympathy and asylum.

"The reaction now is scepticism," said Charny. "It's: 'Who is this scam artist trying to get a job in our country?'"

North Koreans fleeing to China or Zimbabweans crossing illegally into South Africa are widely treated as economic migrants though many may also be escaping persecution, he said.

"We have to maintain a refugee protection regime that doesn't just assume everyone is an illegal economic migrant," Charny added

"That tendency exists in the industrialised countries and in the wealthier countries of the global south."

MDA to map bomb chain; Sources of supply to be profiled geographically

IDNUMBER 200706190093

PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Businessbc

PAGE: D3

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Tom Blackwell, Reuters / Canadian troops exit their vehicles at the beginning of an anti-Taliban operation earlier this month in Zhari District, Afghanistan. Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since the Canadian military deployed there in early 2002. At least 31 of those deaths have been attributed to bombings, either suicide bombers or roadside bombs. ; Colour Photo: Fred Thornhill, Reuters / An honour guard carries the casket of Trooper Darryl Caswell, the 57th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan, who died while leading a convoy. ;

KEYWORDS: SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS; INFORMATION SERVICES; TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

BYLINE: Bruce Constantineau

SOURCE: Vancouver Sun

WORD COUNT: 335

Richmond-based MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates Ltd. has signed a one-year contract to help Canadian military forces uncover the supply chain for deadly roadside bombs and other explosive devices in Afghanistan.

MDA information systems group vice-president David Hargreaves said the company will collect information from a variety of existing sources, including ground-based and airborne surveillance systems, and apply a geographic-profiling technique.

"By combining the information with the background on how the perpetrators operate, you can produce threat maps that give you a probability of where their factories and meeting points and organization points are likely to be," he said in an interview.

The value of the contract with Defence Research and Development Canada was not disclosed.

The work will be done in partnership with Vancouver-based Environmental Criminology Research Inc., which develops and supplies software for geographic profiling and serial-crime analysis to police, military and security customers.

MDA said in a press release Monday that its contract with DRDC was "to demonstrate a technical solution for DRDC's Counter Improvised Explosive Device Initiative (CIED).

This initiative supports Canada's Department of National Defence in their aggressive search for ways to protect Canadian soldiers from threats to their safety while they are in the field."

Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers and one Canadian diplomat have been killed in Afghanistan since the Canadian military deployed to that country in early 2002. At least 31 of those deaths have been attributed to either

suicide bombers or roadside bombs.

Trooper Darryl Caswell became the 57th casualty in Afghanistan when he was driving the convoy's lead vehicle, a Coyote, as it hit a bomb en route to a remote NATO base in Kandahar province's Shahwali Kot district.

Caswell was from Bracebridge, Ont. Two other crew members were injured but are expected to recover.

Geographic profiling is a criminal investigative methodology that analyses the locations of a connected series of crimes to determine the most probable area of offender residence.

The formalized process known today as geographic profiling originated out of research conducted at Simon Fraser University's School of Criminology in 1989.

The Vancouver Police Department instituted the world's first geographic profiling capability in 1995 under then detective inspector Kim Rossmo.

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Unrestrained disrespect for troops, families

IDNUMBER 200706190043
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: A13
BYLINE: Amanda Baye
SOURCE: Special to the Sun
WORD COUNT: 185

Upon hearing the news that the War on War Coalition sent out letters to military personnel for their forthcoming tour in Afghanistan, my heart sank.

I was stunned by the coalition's audacity and angered at its unrestrained disrespect for our troops and their families.

In February, my husband, a reservist based in Vancouver, was deployed for his first Afghanistan tour. The months leading up to his deployment were stressful and emotional. I was dealing with countless uncertainties.

I dreaded the worst-case scenarios, and feared for his safety. I could not imagine receiving a letter from the War on War Coalition stating that my husband was nothing more than "cannon fodder" during an already distressing time.

My husband's decision to go to Afghanistan was not based on a whim, nor made with ease; rather it was debated and carefully considered.

However, once he made his choice, he was firm. There was no way a tacky letter issued by "WOW" would have changed his mind. He considered this opportunity to serve his country alongside other resolute and devoted men and women an honour.

I may not believe in this war, but I believe in my husband and respect his decision. It is a shame that the War on War Coalition cannot do the same.

Amanda Baye lives in Vancouver.

Seven children killed in air strike; Foreign military operations in Afghanistan cause rising anger in populace

IDNUMBER 200706190030
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: KABUL
BYLINE: Sayed Salahuddin
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 235

KABUL — At least seven children were killed in a U.S.–led coalition air strike on a religious school in Afghanistan, the coalition said on Monday, amid rising anger over civilian deaths from foreign military operations.

As many as 60 civilians have been killed in the past three days in the southern Uruzgan province alone, a senior provincial official said.

Some 50 Taliban and Afghan forces were also killed in the battles in Chora district of the rugged province, the head of the provincial council, Mawlavi Hamdullah, told Reuters.

A NATO spokesman in Kabul, Maj. John Thomas, said he knew that a large number of "insurgents" were killed in the battle in the district but said he was aware of only 11 civilians being wounded.

Earlier on Monday, the U.S.–led coalition force apologized for the deaths of the children at a madrassa in southeastern Paktia province at the weekend but said they had no idea children were present when the premises were attacked.

"We are truly sorry for the innocent lives lost in this attack," said Army Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman, in a statement. "We had surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside the building."

The statement said children who survived Sunday's raid said insurgents had forced pupils to stay inside the madrassa. The White House accused the Taliban of using human shields.

In Washington, White House spokesman Tony Snow said: "Obviously any time innocents are killed it is something that is a tragedy and certainly we grieve for those who are lost."

Official slams Afghanistan's false Islam; Female politician says women are regarded as 'pieces of meat' despite the fall of the Taliban

IDNUMBER 200706190029

PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A11

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Ahmad Masood, Reuters / Afghan girl rides on the back of a donkey cart, loaded with items for recycling, in Kabul. It's still difficult for a woman to aspire to a good job in Afghanistan. ;

KEYWORDS: WOMEN; WOMEN'S RIGHTS

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

BYLINE: Tom Blackwell

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 660

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — They may no longer run the government, but southern Afghanistan's influential religious leaders continue to make life painfully hard for women, says Kandahar's new director of women's affairs.

Preaching a false brand of Islam, the mullahs are helping prop up a culture that treats female members like "a piece of meat," Runa Tareen said in an outspoken interview with CanWest News Service.

She acknowledged that women in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban, have made some progress since the Islamist regime fell, especially in terms of winning renewed access to education and jobs.

However, forced marriages, unchecked domestic abuse and restrictive dress codes are still common, largely due to age-old customs and what Tareen called false messages emerging from the area's mosques.

"Everybody listens to the mullah because the mullah is the only person that everyone respects. He knows the Koran, he knows Islam," she said.

"It is up to the religious people to tell families what Islam provides for women's rights . . . But, unfortunately, they are not teaching people respect for women."

Tareen is nothing if not brave. Simply by occupying the government-appointed post, let alone chastising the powerful religious establishment, she has put herself in harm's way.

The 34-year-old assumed the job last October, 18 days after her predecessor, Safia Ahmed-jan, was assassinated just outside her home in Kandahar.

Tareen, however, is fatalistic about the risks of promoting female rights in the city where the Taliban first barred women from working outside the home, going to school, or appearing in public with their faces exposed. Muslims believe the day of their death is preordained, she said, so why fret about when that time will

come?

Tareen is part of a broader effort by Afghanistan's new government to reverse the trampling of women's rights that became a hallmark of the Taliban regime.

Since 2001, girls have been readmitted to schools, and jobs, at least in government and with non-governmental organizations, are again open to women. Even this region, though among the most conservative in the country, has seen advances. The director of Kandahar's main hospital, for instance, is a respected female surgeon.

About half of girls in Kandahar City attend school now, said Tareen, while women have a better chance of finding work outside the home.

But she added the situation is different in rural Kandahar province, with many parents still failing to see the value of educating their daughters. Indeed, throughout the province, enduring Pashtun customs relegate women to the status of second-class citizens.

They frequently have no choice in whom they wed and are often married off to men who are much older, or otherwise unsuitable. It's common for wives to be kept isolated from their families and refused medical treatment, while spousal beatings are widespread and usually go unpunished, Tareen said.

She said she knows of many women, fed up with violent, abusive treatment, who have doused themselves with gasoline and set themselves on fire in grisly suicides.

"The community thinks a woman is like a piece of meat," Tareen said. "A woman is just for giving birth, for raising children . . . The people think, 'If we lose one woman, we can buy another one.' "

Mullahs know that Islam affords women a much higher status and they have a duty to preach that notion to their followers, she said.

But they refuse to do so, partly out of fear that raising women's status, even slightly, would open the floodgates of change, Tareen charged.

As for the burka, one of the most potent symbols of the Taliban years, there is no longer a law making the fully concealing outfit mandatory. But while many Kabul women now appear in public in just a head scarf, it is still rare to see a woman outdoors in Kandahar not wearing a burka.

Tareen recalled hearing a mullah on a local radio station proclaiming that Islam required women to be covered from head to foot. She said she met the cleric later and asked him to show her the scripture that backed up his contention. He never produced the material, she said.

Despite the slow progress, the women's-rights official is optimistic that a period of peace and stability, plus widely available education, could create a new generation that better respects women, and loosens some of the most restrictive customs.

District captured, Taliban claims; Police pull out of Myanishen in a 'tactical withdrawal' following days of fighting

IDNUMBER 200706190028
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final C
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Press; Reuters
WORD COUNT: 232

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan —Police have pulled out of a district in southern Afghanistan, a provincial police chief said today, as the Taliban claimed to have captured the area following days of fighting.

The police exit from the mountainous Myanishen district in the southern province of Kandahar was a "tactical withdrawal," police chief Esmatalluh Alizai told AFP.

A Taliban spokesman said the group had captured the district headquarters and government equipment, such as vehicles, after about three days of fighting.

"The fighting started two to three days ago," spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi told AFP. "The police had been surrounded for about two days. Last night the Taliban captured the district and some equipment."

Ahmadi said the police had suffered casualties but this was rejected by the police chief.

Myanishen borders a district of Uruzgan province, where local officials claimed on Monday scores of civilians were killed in three days of fighting, including NATO bombardments, to dislodge a group of Taliban.

Accounts from Chora district suggested around 60 civilians may have been killed, most of them in bombing raids, provincial council chief Mawlawi Hamdullah told AFP.

The bodies of around 50 Taliban were in the district, he said.

On Sunday at least seven children were killed in a U.S.–led coalition air strike on a religious school, amid rising anger over civilian deaths from foreign military operations. On Monday, the U.S.–led coalition force apologized for the deaths of the children at a madrassa in southeastern Paktia province, but said they had no idea children were present when the premises were attacked.

Anti-narcotics official found guilty; Vancouverite gets four years in Dubai for drug possession

IDNUMBER 200706190001
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final C
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
KEYWORDS: CRIME; CANADA; BRITISH COLUMBIA; ONTARIO
DATELINE: UNITED NATIONS
BYLINE: Steven Edwards
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 169

UNITED NATIONS — A Dubai court found Canadian anti-narcotics official Bert Tatham guilty today on drug possession charges, sentencing him to four years in prison in the Arab emirate.

Barring any successful appeal, the Vancouver resident's main hope for early release is to be included in one of Dubai's periodic amnesties for selected offenders.

From their Collingwood, Ontario, home, Tatham's parents, Louise and Charlie, vowed to seek stepped up help from the Canadian government to achieve at least that.

Tatham's bride-to-be, Sara Gilmer, said from Victoria that she hoped for his fastest possible return. "It's what I feared. I'm so disappointed," she said.

Dubai authorities arrested Tatham April 23 as he entered the emirate after completing the first leg of his return trip to Canada from Afghanistan, where he had worked the previous 12 months helping farmers find alternatives to poppy cultivation.

He admitted he knew he was carrying dried poppy flowers — which he planned to use as props during lectures — but Dubai customs authorities also said they found him in possession of 0.6 grams of hashish.

Search for engagement ring landed officer in Dubai jail

IDNUMBER 200706190155
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
KEYWORDS: CRIME; UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
DATELINE: UNITED NATIONS
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 223

UNITED NATIONS – It was all for a gold watch -- and possibly an engagement ring.

Canadian anti-narcotics official Bert Tatham stopped off in Dubai on his way back from Afghanistan because he wanted to shop in the Arab emirate.

Instead of spending his planned day and a half there after arriving April 23, Dubai customs officials jailed him on suspicion of drugs possession.

But his mother, Louise, said Monday "all this trouble" could have been avoided if he'd only listened to her.

"I'd told him to come straight back and to pass through Dubai, not stop off there," the 60-year-old mother-of-three said from the family home in Collingwood, Ont.

"But he wanted to buy a gold watch, and probably an engagement ring."

Tatham, 35, had been heading back to his current home in Vancouver, where his girlfriend of almost two years, Sara Gilmer, 28, was scheduled to meet him at the airport April 25.

The couple is as good as engaged, but Tatham hasn't actually presented Gilmer with an engagement ring.

"Everyone in my life really loves Bert and thinks he's the perfect man for me," Gilmer said from her home in Victoria, where she works as a substitute elementary school teacher.

"We're not engaged, but I sure hope we get married when he gets home."

Tatham's dad, Charlie, says his son is just as smitten, calling him "gaga" over Gilmer.

But in the short term, everything hinges on what a three-judge panel rules this morning after Tatham's defence lawyers argued at trial last week his drugs possession derived from peculiarities in his work.

"We're hopeful of a good judgment after we explained everything about the nature of his job," said Sharif Emara, legal adviser to Tatham's lawyer, Saeed Al-Ghailani.

If convicted, he faces up to four years in prison.

Afghanistan mission extension requires debate, report says; Experts don't foresee military conclusion by February 2009

IDNUMBER 200706190142
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
KEYWORDS: FOREIGN AID; WAR; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 445

OTTAWA Parliament should immediately debate whether the Canadian Forces commitment to Afghanistan should be extended beyond February 2009, says a Commons defence committee study released Monday.

The all-party committee also said more needs to be done to ensure aid and reconstruction dollars are delivered in a more timely manner to Afghans, especially after some particularly heavy fighting last year.

"None of the witnesses who appeared before the committee expected the military problem in Afghanistan to be solved by February 2009," states the report, the result of a 13-month study of a controversial mission, that has divided Canadians and claimed the lives of 57 soldiers and one diplomat.

"Some spoke of decades; some spoke of generations; but all spoke of a long-term commitment. This raises the question of whether the mission mandate ought to be extended or not."

The committee recommended the government hold a debate "without delay" to give Canadians "an accurate and up-to-date understanding" of the mission and its "decision-making" around the February 2009 deadline.

That date has been a bone of contention among the four federal parties. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has strongly suggested the mission will have to be extended beyond 2009 and has criticized the opposition for calling for arbitrary withdrawal dates.

Moreover, the Forces' top commander in Afghanistan recently said the military is making contingency plans beyond 2009.

The Liberals want Canada to serve notice to its NATO partners that it will give up its dangerous mission in volatile southern Afghanistan, perhaps in favour of a less violent part of the country, by 2009.

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said the Liberals pushed for an immediate debate on the future of the mission because the military needs the 18 remaining months in its current mandate to plan for the future.

"Rotation is in order," Coderre said. "We're an alliance. When a country leaves, there's a replacement."

The NDP wants an immediate withdrawal of troops and reiterated that view in a dissenting opinion.

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The report suggests that Canada could disappoint its allies in southern Afghanistan, which include the U.S., Britain, the Netherlands, Australia and others if it decides to leave Kandahar.

Canada contributes 2,500 of the 12,000 NATO troops in the south, the report says.

"If we leave, someone else will have to carry the load," the report states.

The top three recommendations of the report focused on ways to speed the flow of reconstruction dollars to both the military-dominated provincial reconstruction team and to international organizations working to rebuild Afghanistan.

"While the Defence Department was able to make quick use of reconstruction money, the 'more substantial' funds that go through the Canadian International Development Agency 'were long in coming,' " the report said.

In another development, the Defence Department announced Monday it was more than doubling the amount of money it gives the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty. The payout was raised to \$12,700 from the previous \$4,600.

The move follows a controversy two weeks ago after some military families disclosed they had to pay some of their own funeral expenses.

Women's rights champion takes on Afghan mullahs; Culture of disrespect flows from mosques, says defiant advocate

IDNUMBER 200706190076

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: B6

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Reuters / Afghan girls sit on the floor of a home-based school in Kabul. Under the Taliban, all females were barred from education. ; Photo: Journal Stock / Runa Tareen ;

KEYWORDS: WOMEN; WOMEN'S RIGHTS

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

BYLINE: Tom Blackwell

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 492

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – They may no longer run the government, but southern Afghanistan's influential religious leaders continue to make life painfully hard for women, says Kandahar's new director of women's affairs.

Preaching a false brand of Islam, the mullahs are helping prop up a culture that treats female members like "a piece of meat," Runa Tareen said in an outspoken interview with CanWest News Service.

She acknowledged that women in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban, have made some progress since the Islamist regime fell, especially in terms of winning renewed access to education and jobs.

However, forced marriages, unchecked domestic abuse and restrictive dress codes are still common, largely due to age-old customs and what Tareen called false messages emerging from the area's mosques.

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"It is up to the religious people to tell families what Islam provides for women's rights ... But, unfortunately, they are not teaching people respect for women."

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The 34-year-old assumed the job last October, 18 days after her predecessor, Safia Ahmed-jan, was assassinated just outside her home in Kandahar. Tareen, however, is fatalistic about the risks of promoting female rights in the city where the Taliban first barred women from working outside the home, going to school, or appearing in public with their faces exposed. Muslims believe the day of their death is preordained, she said, so why fret about when that time will come?

Tareen is part of a broader effort by Afghanistan's new government to reverse the trampling of women's rights

that became a hallmark of the Taliban regime.

Since 2001, girls have been readmitted to schools, and jobs, at least in government and with non-governmental organizations, are again open to women. Even this region, though among the most conservative in the country, has seen advances. The director of Kandahar's main hospital, for instance, is a respected female surgeon.

About half of girls in Kandahar City attend school now, said Tareen, while women have a better chance of finding work outside the home. But she added the situation is different in rural Kandahar province, with many parents still failing to see the value of educating their daughters. Indeed, throughout the province, enduring Pashtun customs relegate women to the status of second-class citizens.

They frequently have no choice in whom they wed and are often married off to men who are much older, or otherwise unsuitable. It's common for wives to be kept isolated from their families and refused medical treatment, while spousal beatings are widespread and usually go unpunished, Tareen said.

She said she knows of many women, fed up with such treatment, who have doused themselves with gasoline and set themselves on fire in grisly suicides.

"A woman is just for giving birth, for raising children ... The people think, 'If we lose one woman, we can buy another one,' " Tareen said.

National Post

Hummer H2 small fry compared to Actros; Canadian military picks Mercedes unit

IDNUMBER 200706190006

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Driving

PAGE: W16

ILLUSTRATION: 2008. ; Photo: Supplied / The Canadian Forces puts its trust in heavily armoured Mercedes-Benz Actros trucks. Starting this fall, 82 of them will be sent to Afghanistan. ;

KEYWORDS: AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY; AUTOMOBILES

SOURCE: Journal News Services; CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 957

Want to one-up that guy who never shuts up about his Hummer H2 and how the brand's military heritage makes it so tough? Easy: park a Mercedes-Benz Actros in your driveway.

Not that you can simply walk into a Mercedes dealer and buy one (if you could, you'd need deep, deep pockets: the contract won by DaimlerChrysler to supply the vehicles was worth \$87 million), but the Actros was the winning vehicle in the Canadian Forces' Armoured Heavy Support Vehicle System (CF AHSVS) contest; 82 of them will be sent to Afghanistan starting this fall.

From the looks of it, we can think of few vehicles we'd rather see our troops getting around in while in combat.

The Actros is a cab-over design, so driver and passengers sit slightly forward of the front axle.

There are four of those, for a total of eight wheels, all of which are driven. Forget 4x4 — how does 8x8 sound?

The trucks ordered by the Forces are the Actros 4100 series, powered by a 16-litre turbo-diesel V-8 that makes 442 horsepower. That doesn't sound like a whole heap of huzzah for an engine that big, but the torque figure should be something rather more spectacular.

We couldn't find exact specs for the Actros 4100, but based on what we could dredge up online, 1,700 lb.-ft. at about 1,100 r.p.m. is probably close. You'd need five Hummer H2s — each with 365 lb.-ft. — to beat that.

According to the Canadian-American Strategic Review website (www.sfu.ca/casr/), the Forces' Actros trucks will come in four configurations, each one designed for a specific purpose: hauling cargo, recovery, transporting tanks and a palletized loading system.

The new trucks will have armoured cabs that give all-around protection from rifle fire and blasts, plus a mine-resistant floor.

Aiding in this regard is the Mercedes "Telligent" electronically controlled automatic transmission, which requires no mechanical connection between the shift lever and the gearbox itself.

In its most basic form, the trucks will measure 8.4 metres long and stand 4.02 metres high and 2.9 metres wide.

Top speed is just 88 km/h, but who cares about that?

The CASR figures the new Actros will be perfect for transporting the Leopard 2 A6M tanks recently leased by the Forces for use in Afghanistan.

As well as military applications — Mercedes says as many as 50 armies worldwide employ Actros trucks in some capacity — the Actros is popular with European logistics and trucking companies.

TAURUS RETURNS AFTER MARKET BREAK

The Taurus is dead ... long live the Taurus

Ford's long-standing Taurus was discontinued last year, having ostensibly been replaced with the slow-selling Five Hundred sedan and Freestyle wagon/crossover introduced in 2005.

Earlier this year, Ford announced that it would rename the Five Hundred and Freestyle ... as the Taurus and Taurus X.

It's a strange move, but we suspect it might work.

Not only should the added recognition of the Taurus nameplate help boost sales of these big cars, but a number of mechanical upgrades will no doubt improve what was already a decent, if unremarkable, car.

The biggest improvement will be under the hood, where the "new" Taurus will get Ford's corporate 3.5-litre V6 and six-speed automatic powertrain.

This is the same combo used to great success in the Edge crossover, and will be a good fit in the Taurus, where the engine's 265 horsepower will be a huge boost over the 203-horse motor previously bolted into the Five Hundred and Freestyle.

Standard safety features include Ford's AdvanceTrac stability control system and side airbags with a roll-over curtain air bag. Ford's new Sync mobile music and communications system is standard, too.

The Taurus will also get revised styling inside and out compared with the Five Hundred and Freestyle, plus a redesigned suspension.

The new Taurus is on sale now. Sedan pricing starts at \$30,899.

VW GTI MAKES HIGH-PROFILE DEBUT

For many Canadians, May means heading to the lake to open the cottage. But for the past 26 years, Volkswagen GTI enthusiasts have flocked to the banks of the Worthersee, a lake in western Austria, for what has become a legendary event celebrating this little car that brought performance to the people.

May 2007 marked the 26th anniversary of the Worthersee meet and the first time that Volkswagen and Audi were officially represented.

And after the treat VW gave the estimated 200,000 people who turned out this year, they'll be invited back for 2008: The highlight of the company booth was a GTI show car built specifically for Worthersee.

And built is certainly the word — the GTI W12–650 is stacked. The centrepiece is a rear–mounted, 640–horsepower, twin–turbocharged W12 engine hooked up to a six–speed automatic transmission borrowed from the Bentley Continental GT. VW says the car is good for a 3.7–second 0–to–100 km/h sprint and, for any driver brave enough, a 325 km/h top speed.

The performance potential certainly is dramatic, but this is no wolf in sheep's clothing. Exterior add–ons include huge wheels stuffed inside wild fenders that blend into ground–hugging bumpers and side skirts.

Sure, it's showy, but VW says the extra bodywork is functional, serving to get sufficient air to the engine and to provide enough downforce to keep the rear wheels planted at high speeds.

Volkswagen calls the GTI W12–650 "a show car, no more, no less," so we're not holding our breath that anything like it will show up in VW showrooms anytime soon.

But according to VWVortex.com, a massive VW enthusiast website, company officials say the car represents what a future Volkswagen World Rally Championship (WRC) Golf or GTI might look like, as Volkswagen plans to re–enter that race series in the future.

The same VW reps said that if that happens, the company might actually build and sell 100 or so road–going GTI W12–650s with a pricetag of \$130,000 to help fund the WRC effort.

PORSCHE PASSING ON DETROIT AUTO SHOW

Porsche will skip Detroit's North American International Auto Show, focusing instead on shows elsewhere in North America, the German automaker said recently.

The decision is part of a wider effort to scale back appearances at trade shows where the opportunity for building customers has fallen, the Stuttgart–based company said.

"As part of the general reduction in trade–fair appearances which began two years ago, in favour of greater emphasis on direct contact with potential customers, motor show activities will in future be concentrated in the main sales areas," the company said, singling out auto shows in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami and Toronto.

The company's sales figures backed up its assertion, with more than 20,000 of the 36,669 cars it sold in fiscal year 2005–2006 coming from the U.S. east and west coasts.

Detroit's auto show is scheduled to take place Jan. 19–27, 2008, with three days of media previews before it opens to the general public.

Afghan fighting kills 100 Taliban launching attacks on police in southern province of Uruzgan

SOURCETAG 0706190348

PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 285

More than 100 people, including militants, civilians and police, have died in three days of fierce clashes between NATO forces and Taliban fighters in Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, Afghan officials said yesterday.

Some preliminary estimates of the death toll exceeded 200 people, but precise numbers were not available because of the continued fighting.

In eastern Afghanistan, U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a compound suspected of housing al-Qaida militants, killing seven boys and several insurgents, officials said.

In the capital Kabul, police said they have detained a suspect in connection with the deadly Sunday bus bombing that killed at least 35 people, most of them police trainers, in the fifth suicide attack in Afghanistan in three days.

The suspect, whose name and nationality were not disclosed, had pictures of slain Taliban leader Mullah Dadullah in his phone, as well as text messages from a foreign country, Afghan officials said.

In Uruzgan province, Mullah Ahmadullah Khan, the head of the provincial council, said the clashes in the Chora district had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

Lt.-Col. Maria Carl, a spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force, said there is "definitely a large engagement" going on but could not confirm figures.

Netherlands defence chief Gen. Dick Berlijn said a Dutch soldier was killed in a battle that started over the weekend with Taliban fighters near Chora. Dutch troops had been providing backup to local forces in and around Chora since Saturday, when several hundred Taliban fighters began launching attacks on police posts, he said.

On Sunday in eastern Paktika province, in an operation backed by Afghan troops, coalition warplanes targeted a compound that also contained a mosque and an Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys, aged 10 to 16.

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," spokesman Maj. Chris Belcher said.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has sent a team to investigate. KEYWORDS=WORLD

DND boosts burial bucks

SOURCETAG 0706190340
PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 7
BYLINE: CP
WORD COUNT: 211

Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan will now be treated the same as fallen RCMP officers when it comes to their funerals.

The Defence Department quietly confirmed yesterday that it has more than doubled the burial stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty, bringing the military in line with support the Mounties offer members.

The new rate of \$12,700 came into effect June 1 amid an uproar over unpaid funeral expenses, but will be retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began its involvement in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001.

DECADE-OLD POLICY

It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier directed the military's casualty support centre to write to the families of Canadians who've died since 2001 to ensure they submit claims for the items that had not been previously covered and to verify whether they, too, suffered a shortfall.

Spokeswoman Isabelle Bouchard said defence staff modelled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty.

The RCMP policy was last updated in November 2006 and a spokeswoman said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies of all their funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current." KEYWORDS=CANADA

Afghan fighting kills 100 Taliban launching attacks on police in southern province of Uruzgan

SOURCETAG 0706190428

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 285

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Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," spokesman Maj. Chris Belcher said.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has sent a team to investigate. KEYWORDS=WORLD

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SOURCETAG 0706190421

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 8

BYLINE: CP

WORD COUNT: 211

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City order burns troops Pulling fire, ambulance ribbons is wrong

SOURCETAG 0706190411

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 3

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Joe Warmington, Sun Media The Support Our Troops ribbon on Toronto Fire vehicles, which were paid for by firefighters, are to be removed in September.

WORD COUNT: 854

Our brave troops will still be fighting in Afghanistan this September even if the magnetic ribbon support decals on Toronto Fire trucks and ambulances won't be.

The city has ordered the Support Our Troop decals to be removed from all fire trucks and EMS vehicles on Sept. 4, the Sun has learned.

The reason? It depends on who you talk to. And there are lots of contradictions.

Some say it is because it was not brought to council for proper approval, others say protocol was not followed. Another reason given is it was a one-year project.

But many City Hall sources tell me it has everything to do with some complaints from a few anti-war citizens who have the ear of some leftist councillors — and felt the ribbons were in support of the war in Afghanistan and not just in support of the troops.

'IN CONVERSATIONS'

"It was a decision I made in conversations I had with the two chiefs," said city manager Shirley Hoy, who was good enough to return a call yesterday on this and own up.

Several members of council did not extend the courtesy. Having said that, Hoy, though, still attempted to dance around this by saying it was a "one-year support program" and that the decision was made to remove the decals when the vehicles were scheduled for "regular maintenance."

Surely, Shirley, every vehicle is not going in on the same day for repairs?

Later she admitted the support ribbons did not meet "certain corporate standards" for the city.

Maybe we can arrange to give the troops over there some parking tickets and send over a bylaw officer to make sure they are complying with the smoking rules? Corporate standards! What the hell are they talking about?

The whole thing is outrageous but at least now we are on to what this is really all about. They should just say it. This is the politically correct leftist crowd getting their way — at the expense of our amazing troops in the battle of their lives. This has got to be a moral victory for the Taliban.

The guys really on the spot here are Fire Chief Bill Stewart and Ambulance Chief Bill Farr. Two very good guys who essentially answer to council and to senior administration and have their hands tied. Also, there is no way the paramedics and firefighters in this town would approve. I know many and their respect for the troops is unwavering.

While Chief Stewart said the decals "did not meet corporate standards ... and the corporate policy must be adhered to," decals or no decals he also emphasized "we certainly support the Canadian troops." He said firefighters have had fundraisers and other initiatives to show that.

If they do, no political pressure from some leftist anti-war activist should be able to stop that.

Shame on anybody who is messing with that. Like it or not, this country is at war and it's imperative we support the men and women doing the heavy lifting every chance we get. Hoy told me the decals were put on a year ago and were to be removed at the end of one year. No one else indicated this was the plan.

If it was, it would be unprecedented in Canadian military history. Imagine if they'd put up yellow ribbons during World War II for just the year 1942? There is at least one veteran upset about this.

"I can guarantee that no one on city council has ever served in the Armed Forces but they are always eager to jump to the front of the line when a Forces photo opportunity comes along and shout that they support the troops," said Don Ashfield.

"City council can vote approval to bump their pay, pad their expense accounts and attend many meetings where free food is given, but Support Our Troops? Never."

A spokesman in the mayor's office said he "didn't know anything about this." Same goes for several other councillors — all of whom did not return calls.

Yeah, sure!

Scott Marks, president of the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters Association, said the reaction of members ranges from some who are not too worked up to others who are outraged. It was the association who designed and paid for the decals on the fire trucks — the EMS ones were paid for with taxpayers' money.

More than a month ago pressure was brought to bear by Now magazine, which quoted specifically Councillor Janet Davis. "I do connect the Afghan mission to the Support Our Troops sticker. That is where our troops are being killed," she told Now reporter Andrew Cash in May.

"Not only does this not communicate a City of Toronto policy, but it also sends a political message about a public policy matter that is quite contentious. And we shouldn't be using public funds for it."

'A POLITICAL MESSAGE'

But if we are going to be by the book about public money at City Hall, let's not start at the expense of the at-risk troops — 57 of whom have died in battle.

This is not the issue to try to show corporate precision and integrity. Try doing it when you are quietly voting yourselves an 11% raise.

Whatever you think of this, a decision has been made to have those decals removed. "I think it's crazy," said one firefighter. "We sent over a video to the troops to show them these ribbons on the trucks. I hope they know we still support them."

Perhaps this is not over yet. It's actually up to you. This might be a time for us to collectively speak up. If there is public reaction against this nonsense, maybe we can turn this around and they will leave those decals right where they are -- and leave them there until every member of our Canadian Armed Forces is back from this conflict and not a moment before.

Our troops will still be fighting in Afghanistan in September and if we make enough noise perhaps those decals supporting them will remain on the side of our municipal emergency vehicles.

KEYWORDS=TORONTO AND GTA

Afghan fighting kills 100 Taliban launching attacks on police in southern province of Uruzgan

SOURCETAG 0706181533

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 8

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 285

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Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," spokesman Maj. Chris Belcher said.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has sent a team to investigate. KEYWORDS=WORLD

DND boosts burial bucks

SOURCETAG 0706181526

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 5

BYLINE: CP

WORD COUNT: 211

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THE AFGHAN MISSION Deployment tarnished by allegations of detainee abuse, committee reports

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071700234

DATE: 2007.06.19

PAGE: A7

BYLINE: BRIAN LAGHI

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: AP

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 385

WORD COUNT: 389

BRIAN LAGHI OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF Canada's effort in Afghanistan has been marred by the controversy involving the handover of Afghan detainees and deaths of civilians, the House of Commons defence committee says in a long-awaited report.

The committee, which issued the report yesterday, also called for a debate to take place one year from now to decide whether Ottawa should extend the mission that has already cost the lives of 58 Canadians. The report also says that the army's role is not well understood by the general voting public.

MPs concluded that three separate issues, taken together, have tarnished what has been a largely successful mission.

"[The] issues have conspired to take a touch of the gloss off the military record," the report says.

The first is the large number of investigations of unproven allegations examining the treatment of Afghan detainees.

The second notes a "degree of associated concern" over the quality of the arrangement between the Canadian Forces and the Afghan army that governed the details of the transfers.

"Third, there have been a small number of incidents in which innocent Afghan civilians have been killed during fighting between ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] and Taliban forces. Most of these unfortunate occurrences have come from air strikes." The report goes on to say that, although Canada has no combat aircraft in the country, Afghan citizens fail to discriminate between foreign troops after an attack. .

"No matter the circumstances, these regrettable incidents provide a continuing concern in the campaign to 'win the hearts and minds' of ordinary Afghans." In its executive summary, the committee also notes those who appeared before them are convinced that the mission will not end by 2009, the date to which Canadian troops are committed.

"Not one of the witnesses who appeared before the committee expected the military problem in Afghanistan to be solved by February of 2009. Everyone thinks it will take a long time. Some spoke of decades; some spoke of generations; but all spoke of a long-term commitment." The report says that Canadians should also recall they are not the only ones involved and that should Canada leave, someone will "have to carry the

load." The NDP and Bloc Quebecois released dissenting reports, with the NDP arguing for an immediate withdrawal of troops.

With a report from Canadian Press

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: United States; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Taliban

THE AFGHAN MISSION Taliban, civilians die in fierce battles Suicide bombers reportedly being sent to West, including Canada

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL
IDN: 071700233
DATE: 2007.06.19
PAGE: A14
BYLINE: NOOR KHAN
SECTION: International News
SOURCE: AP
EDITION: Metro
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
WORDS: 222
WORD COUNT: 219

NOOR KHAN Associated Press KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN More than 100 people, including militants, civilians and police, have died in three days of fierce clashes between NATO forces and Taliban fighters in Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, Afghan officials said yesterday. Some preliminary estimates of the death toll exceeded 200.

In the eastern province of Paktika, U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a compound suspected of housing al-Qaeda militants, killing seven boys and several insurgents, officials said. The compound contained a mosque and a madrassa , or Islamic school, resulting in the death of the boys, aged 10 to 16.

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside the building," said Major Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman. He accused the militants of not letting the children leave the compound that was targeted.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said it has sent a team with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to investigate.

Meanwhile, teams of newly trained suicide bombers are being sent to the United States, Canada, Britain and Germany, according to evidence contained on a new videotape obtained by ABCNews.com.

Teams assigned to carry out the attacks were introduced at an al-Qaeda/Taliban training-camp ceremony held June 9.

U.S. intelligence officials, however, described the event as another example of "an aggressive and sophisticated propaganda campaign."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: United States; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Taliban; al-Qaeda

THE AFGHAN MISSION Taliban, civilians die in fierce battles Suicide bombers reportedly being sent to West

THE AFGHAN MISSION Deployment tarnished by detainee abuse, committee reports

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071700232

DATE: 2007.06.19

PAGE: A7

BYLINE: BRIAN LAGHI

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Early

DATELINE:

WORDS: 388

WORD COUNT: 397

BRIAN LAGHI OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF Canada's effort in Afghanistan has been blemished by the controversy involving the handover of Afghan detainees and deaths of civilians, the House of Commons defence committee says in a long-awaited report.

The committee, which issued the report yesterday, also called for a debate to take place one year from now to decide whether Ottawa should extend the mission that has already cost the lives of 58 Canadians. The report also says that the army's role is not well understood by the general voting public.

MPs concluded that three separate issues, taken together, have tarnished what has been a largely successful mission.

"[The] issues have conspired to take a touch of the gloss off the military record," the report says. The first is the large number of investigations of unproven allegations examining the treatment of Afghan detainees while in Canadian hands and their subsequent transfer to Afghan authorities.

The second notes a "degree of associated concern" over the quality of the arrangement between the Canadian Forces and the Afghan army that governed the details of detainee transfers.

"Third, there have been a small number of incidents in which innocent Afghan civilians have been killed during fighting between ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] and Taliban forces. Most of these unfortunate occurrences have come from the collateral damage of air strikes." The report goes on to say that, although Canada has no combat aircraft in the country, Afghan citizens fail to discriminate between foreign troops after an attack takes place.

"No matter the circumstances, these regrettable incidents provide a continuing concern in the campaign to 'win the hearts and minds' of ordinary Afghans." In its executive summary, the all-party committee of MPs also notes those who appeared before them are convinced that the mission will not end by 2009, the date to which Canadian troops are currently committed.

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ones involved and that, should Canada leave two years from now, someone will "have to carry the load."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strive; foreign policy; defence; deaths; canadians; political

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

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PAGE: A7

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SOURCE: STAFF CP

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DATELINE:

WORDS: 379

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GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; defence; foreign policy; defence; deaths; canadians; political

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

LEGAL JEOPARDY Drug expert's family awaits verdict from Dubai Vancouver anti-narcotics worker found with traces of hashish in his pocket could face four years in foreign jail

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071700221

DATE: 2007.06.19

PAGE: S3

BYLINE: ARMINA LIGAYA AND ALWYNNE GWILT

SECTION: British Columbia N

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: VANCOUVER, TORONTO

WORDS: 574

WORD COUNT: 522

ARMINA LIGAYA AND ALWYNNE GWILT With a report from Graeme Smith in Afghanistan
VANCOUVER, TORONTO Sara Gilmer went for a swim and walked her dog yesterday, trying to distract herself from the possibility that her boyfriend, Bert Tatham, could spend the next four years in a Dubai jail.

The Victoria elementary school substitute teacher was preparing for a late night phone call to find out the fate of Mr. Tatham, an anti-narcotics worker who has been detained in Dubai for the past two months.

The 36-year-old Vancouver man was tried on drug possession charges that his family says stem from a misunderstanding of his role in fighting Afghanistan's drug trade.

A three-judge panel in Dubai delivers its verdict this morning, and the ruling will determine whether Mr. Tatham can head home or must spend the next four years in prison, the maximum sentence under the country's zero-tolerance drug policy.

Ms. Gilmer said the past two months have been exhausting, but she is trying to remain positive.

"I think it could go either way. I'd like to say that he's going to get off, I just don't want to get my hopes up." Mr. Tatham was arrested in Dubai on April 23 after airport officials found less than a gram of hashish residue in his pants pocket. Mr.

Tatham, who was working in Afghanistan for the U.S. State Department, was on his way home to Vancouver. He had spent the past year educating poppy farmers on how to get out of that business.

Two days before he was to arrive in Canada, Ms. Gilmer got a call in the middle of the night from Mr. Tatham.

"He just said that he'd been stopped in Dubai, and that they found something on him that they didn't like," she said.

Ms. Gilmer said she couldn't believe it at first. "With a boyfriend in Afghanistan for a year, there's a lot of bad things you can picture happening, but this just isn't one of them," she said.

LEGAL JEOPARDY Drug expert's family awaits verdict from Dubai Vancouver anti-narcotics worker found v

She last spoke to Mr. Tatham on Saturday, and said Mr. Tatham thinks he'll be given a four-year sentence. If that's the case, she'll go to Dubai to visit. Mr. Tatham's parents, Charlie and Louise Tatham, are not optimistic after a conversation with their son on Saturday.

"Bert was totally in complete angst because he had heard snippets of the way his defence was described in the Arab news, which was horribly inaccurate," said Charlie Tatham from his home outside Collingwood, Ont.

Bert had worked for the Poppy Elimination Program (PEP), introduced by the State Department after disappointing results in poppy eradication efforts in 2005. PEP teams were sent to 19 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces last year to monitor the notoriously corrupt eradication programs operated by provincial governors.

"We're feeling badly for him because it's entirely out of his control," his father said. "Hopefully the judge will see him for what he's done: he wasn't an entertainer rolling into town with a stash of hash, he was just a guy who'd finished up a highly important piece of work and was in the wrong place at the wrong time." Bert's older brother Chuck said he takes comfort in the fact that Bert is not being harmed, and still in communication.

Flying out to visit Bert is an option, but one they don't want to consider, he said.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Dubai; Afghanistan; Vancouver

SUBJECT TERM: illegal drugs; drug charges; justice; Canadians

PERSONAL NAME: Bert Tatham

Why isn't anyone listening?

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071700187

DATE: 2007.06.19

PAGE: A16

BYLINE: TERRI BETTS

SECTION: Letter to the Edit

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: North Vancouver BC

WORDS: 88

WORD COUNT: 112

Terri Betts North Vancouver The difficulties in convincing Afghan farmers to switch crops – given their extensive experience with opium poppies and the suitability of the country's climate – are obvious (The Perils Of Trying To Uproot An Opium Economy – June 18).

Why can't some resources be diverted from military action to providing the infrastructure necessary to move opium production to the pharmaceutical industry instead? Millions of patients worldwide with acute and chronic pain mean a predictable market for morphine, and Afghan farmers deserve the chance to sell crops to legitimate buyers.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; agriculture; economy; opium

The conflict within Islam is the conflict of our time

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071700180

DATE: 2007.06.19

PAGE: A17

BYLINE: JEFFREY SIMPSON

SECTION: Comment Column

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 664

WORD COUNT: 643

JEFFREY SIMPSON The most consequential international story, the one our media are failing to grasp, remains the conflict within Islam.

The news is everywhere apparent. Sunnis and Shiites bloody each other in Iraq. The Taliban and al-Qaeda strike other Muslims in Afghanistan. Lebanese leaders are assassinated. Bombs go off in Algeria. Pakistan remains deeply unstable. Authoritarian regimes squelch simmering conflicts in Egypt, Iran, Jordan and Syria.

Part of that conflict within Islam is how to deal with those of other faiths; the other part is how believers should deal with each other.

With a few exceptions (Indonesia and Turkey), Islamic countries have been unable to become pluralist democracies. They have also largely failed, again with a few exceptions, to make economic advances.

Even the ones with huge oil revenues cannot create democracies or strong civil societies, or effectively spread their oil wealth around their citizens.

Within the Arab world, economic stagnation has been particularly evident, as a series of United Nations reports by Arab economists have showed. These reports on human development have been devastating, although they seem to have had no effect on their intended targets: Arab governments and civil society.

We in the news media focus on the external manifestations of the internal Islamic struggle: the Palestinian–Israeli dispute, al-Qaeda attacks, fiery speeches by Iranian leaders. But the internal struggle is about ideas, ideologies, interpretations of history and sacred text, ethnicities, power struggles.

These intellectual struggles are hard to understand, harder still to report. But these struggles are at the core of Islam's conflicts.

The result is less a clash of civilizations than a clash within a civilization, the reverberations of which cause clashes with others.

Read Lawrence Wright's Pulitzer and Gelber Prize-winning book, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, to understand better the power of ideas in shaping action. The ideas of terror, legitimized by certain readings of the Koran, grew in the minds of future terrorists before anything happened; the antipathy to existing regimes in Islamic countries fuelled the alienation that made zealots hate Islamic moderates.

The United States and other Western powers have certainly misunderstood this internal clash and made things

worse. The conflict in Iraq since the disastrous U.S. invasion has become a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. The daily violence is horrifying – not just the bomb attacks but the bodies discovered each morning with signs of torture and bullets in the back of the head.

Washington's refusal to deal with Hamas after it won the Palestinian election has now boomeranged. The Palestinian Authority is split, ideologically and geographically.

All the administration's talk about spreading democracy has been shelved, because the regimes the Americans count on for stability, from Morocco to Jordan, don't want democracy. They fear it, since they might lose power in democratic elections. The refusal to talk to Iran undermined Iranian moderates and disheartened pro-American Iranians. And its obsessive focus on Iraq diverted attention from Afghanistan, where the Taliban had given sanctuary to al-Qaeda.

Across the Islamic world (again with certain exceptions), the conflict rages about the role of religion and the state, the relations of believers to non-believers, the failure to produce economic growth.

In Thailand's south, Muslim terrorists kill Buddhists every week, whereas Muslims in the rest of the country are well-integrated in society. Pakistan is still a cauldron of tribal conflicts, ruled by a president losing his grip. Afghanistan is unstable, Iraq chaotic, Syria thuggish, Saudi Arabia authoritarian and afraid, Iran assertive, Lebanon disintegrating (again), and Algeria returning to low-level violence. Libya is governed by an eccentric, Sudan by accomplices to murder, Somalia by gangs, the Persian Gulf states by autocrats.

It's easy for all of them to blame others for their misfortunes, and others deserve some portion of the blame. But the conflict within Islam, which is the conflict of our time, is for those of the faith.

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ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

SUBJECT TERM: strife; religion; islam; muslims; ethnic groups; terrorism

THE AFGHAN MISSION: DON'T BE 'CANNON FODDER,' TROOPS TOLD

Warring sides in Afghan debate set to collide on Quebec streets

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071700165

DATE: 2007.06.19

PAGE: A1

BYLINE: INGRID PERITZ

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Montreal PQ

WORDS: 695

WORD COUNT: 602

INGRID PERITZ MONTREAL Anti-war protesters will confront Afghanistan-bound troops in Quebec City Friday as a sign of the tension in Canada's most anti-war province.

Organizers plan a countermarch to oppose what is intended to be a high-profile send-off parade by the Royal 22nd Regiment at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier.

More than 2,000 soldiers of the Vandoos and other regiments are to take part in a support-the-troops parade as part of a public-relations offensive to try to win the hearts of Quebeckers, who consistently show the lowest level of support for the Afghan mission.

But not everyone has been persuaded. Last week, anti-war protesters sent 3,000 letters to Valcartier military families, urging soldiers to reject their deployment and resist becoming "cannon fodder" for the war. On Friday, the demonstrators will protest along a parallel route to the soldiers.

"We are not aiming for confrontation, but you can't predict what every individual will do," said Mathilde Forest-Riviere, a spokeswoman for the War on War Coalition.

For some, the conflict is personal. Francis Dupuis-Deri, a political science professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal, will be on the protesters' side of the barricades. His younger sister, Captain Catherine Deri, will be marching with her regiment on the other side.

"I love my sister, so I'm very troubled and worried that she's being deployed to Afghanistan, even if it's her personal choice," Prof. Dupuis-Deri said in an interview yesterday. "My sister will be on the other side of the police line on Friday." The professor calls the Afghan mission an unjust war and says he believes Canada is doing the bidding of the White House by sending troops. He wrote an open letter to his sister in Quebec newspapers last week, asking her and other Canadian soldiers how many would return home in coffins.

The Friday event "is to make the soldiers look like family men and sympathetic people, while they're going over to make the situation worse. Their presence will cause deaths and support a corrupt regime.

We want to counter the army's marketing operation," he said.

For her part, Capt. Deri said she respects her brother's viewpoint but supports the Canadian mission's goals.

THE AFGHAN MISSION: DON'T BE 'CANNON FODDER,' TROOPS TOLD Warring sides in Afghan debate

"I'm all for difference of opinion and my brother sharing his views. It's very democratic, and Canadians are flying around the world so that others have the same freedom," Capt. Deri said in an interview.

Friday's march is part of a blitz by the Armed Forces to boost troop morale and bolster support for the mission on the eve of the Quebec regiments' departure.

On Thursday, 1,700 soldiers in their desert-coloured uniforms will attend a CFL pre-season game between the Montreal Alouettes and Toronto Argonauts at Montreal's Molson Stadium.

Soldiers are also heading to 18 cities and towns across Quebec to hand out flags representing the Afghan mission, as part of a goodwill gesture, Lieutenant-Commander Hubert Genest said.

"We often have to explain the work we're doing," he said, calling the mission noble and saying it coincides with Quebecers' priorities of peace and stability.

"We're trying to engage people so they understand there's a difference between the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that Afghanistan is for a good cause," he said.

The \$125,000 send-off on Friday is the final public event for the troops before they deploy at the end of next month.

It begins with a gathering for soldiers and their families at the Quebec City Convention Centre. Original plans called for the parading troops, under the eye of politicians and dignitaries, to parade down Quebec City's Grande Allee and past the Quebec National Assembly. But the Armed Forces are in talks with police about possibly changing the route, another army spokesman said.

A poll published in the current issue of Policy Options, a Canadian public-policy magazine, found that only 38 per cent of Quebecers thought the Afghan mission enhanced Canada's reputation, 10 points below the national average.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Quebec; Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; defence; strife

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

IN BRIEF Soldiers' families to get more for funerals

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071700120

DATE: 2007.06.19

PAGE: A6

BYLINE: GLORIA GALLOWAY

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 455

WORD COUNT: 406

GLORIA GALLOWAY OTTAWA The Department of National Defence has nearly tripled the amount it will give the families of dead soldiers to help pay funeral expenses.

The increase, from \$4,600 to \$12,700 plus the cost of a plot and a headstone, follows the highly publicized trip to Ottawa by the family of a young military policeman killed by a roadside bomb last year in Afghanistan.

The military says the increase was planned long before Lincoln and Laurie Dinning told reporters that their requests for additional funds to cover the costs of burying their son Matthew had gone unanswered.

But Mr. Dinning said he is pleased with the way the dispute has been resolved – and glad that other families will not have to face the same fight for funding.

"This morning [I] received a letter from Lt. Col. Gerry Blais, the director of casualty support for DND," Mr. Dinning said yesterday in an e-mail.

Lieutenant-Colonel Blais informed him of the increase in the funeral stipend. "Not only that, but it now allows for things such as obituaries, flowers and reception costs [previously NOT covered]," Mr. Dinning wrote. "And it gets better. They are making it retroactive to Oct.

7, 2001 to include ALL Afghanistan fallen soldiers." Mr. Dinning also received a telephone call last week from General Rick Hillier, the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Gen. Hillier was "apologizing for the whole mess and he said that now there is a centralized claim centre, whereas before each base commander handled the families' bills. He also said DND would be contacting each family by letter and asking them to submit receipts for items not previously covered," Mr. Dinning wrote.

A Defence official said yesterday that the increase in the rate for funeral expenses was actually put to the Treasury Board in the week that the Dinnings made the eight-hour drive to Ottawa from their home in Wingham, Ont.

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor asked for a review of the old amount shortly after the Conservatives took office because it had not changed since 1999, she said.

The old guidelines were deemed too rigid. Now any expense, as long as it is reasonable and related to the funeral, will be covered up to \$12,700.

The policy has been backdated to Oct. 7, 2001, because that was the day Canada decided to send troops to Afghanistan. To date, 57 soldiers and one Canadian diplomat have been killed during the mission.

The Dinnings spent more than \$25,000 to cover the cost of Matthew's funeral and to deal with the psychological fallout of his loss.

The government initially gave them just \$6,400, but increased that by \$4,700 after they went public with their complaints.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: defence; deaths; funerals; government finance

PERSONAL NAME: Matthew Dinning

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

Fighting claims more than 100 Afghans

SOURCETAG 0706190242
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
ILLUSTRATION: photo of HAMID KARZAI
BYLINE: SUN MEDIA NEWS SERVICES
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 349

More than 100 people including militants, civilians, and police have been killed in a fierce three-day battle between NATO troops and insurgents, Afghan officials said yesterday, while U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a suspected al-Qaida compound, killing seven boys and several fighters.

Afghanistan has seen a sharp spike in violence the last several days, leading to a mounting number of civilian casualties — deaths and injuries sapping support for foreign troops and the government of President Hamid Karzai.

But in the south, in Uruzgan province, the Taliban launched what appears to be their biggest mass offensive of the year, forcing NATO troops to respond.

Dutch military officials said hundreds of Taliban fighters have attacked police posts en masse, sparking a three-day battle officials said was still continuing.

The mass attack appeared to be a change in strategy by the insurgents, who have been relying on an increasing number of suicide and roadside bombings so far this year.

Maj.-Gen. Jouke Eikelboom, director of operations with the Dutch military, said Karzai and the Uruzgan governor sought military support after several hundred Taliban fighters attacked the district of Chora.

Precise casualty figures were not immediately available because of the continued fighting, though two Afghan officials said more than 100 people had been killed, including at least 16 police.

Afghan officials said Taliban fighters sought shelter in civilian homes and that NATO bombers later targeted them. One wounded man at the main Uruzgan hospital told Associated Press that 18 members of his family had been killed.

"I have talked to President Karzai and asked him to send helicopters to ferry the wounded to Kabul," said Mullah Ahmadullah Khan, the head of Uruzgan's provincial council, who estimated the clashes in Chora had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

Canada has about 2,500 troops operating mainly in Kandahar province. There have been no reports of any involvement in the fighting elsewhere.

To the east, in Paktika province, U.S.-coalition warplanes targeted a compound Sunday that also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys ages 10 to 16.

Paktika Gov. Akram Akhpelwak said there normally is co-ordination between the government and international forces but said he was not told of the missile strike beforehand.

Authorities are working with foreign forces "to have better co-ordination and to not have these misunderstandings," Akhpelwak said. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Funeral stipend raised

SOURCETAG 0706190241

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A4

BYLINE: CP

WORD COUNT: 174

Canada's Defence Department has more than doubled the funeral stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty. The new rate of \$12,700 will apply to all service members killed since the country began its involvement in Afghanistan in October 2001. Last month, a controversy erupted in the House of Commons when it was revealed that some families had to pay out-of-pocket for some burial expenses. A spokesperson for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor says the new death benefits program is also more flexible, picking up costs for things such as obituaries, flowers and receptions -- items that until this point had not been covered. Isabelle Bouchard says defence staff tried to model the new benefits package on what the RCMP provides for its officers and their families. The old military rate of \$4,675 had not been revised since 1999. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Afghan fighting kills 100 TALIBAN LAUNCHING ATTACKS ON POLICE IN SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF URUZGAN

SOURCETAG 0706190652

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 30

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 285

More than 100 people, including militants, civilians and police, have died in three days of fierce clashes between NATO forces and Taliban fighters in Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, Afghan officials said yesterday.

Some preliminary estimates of the death toll exceeded 200 people, but precise numbers were not available because of the continued fighting.

In eastern Afghanistan, U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a compound suspected of housing al-Qaida militants, killing seven boys and several insurgents, officials said.

In the capital Kabul, police said they have detained a suspect in connection with the deadly Sunday bus bombing that killed at least 35 people, most of them police trainers, in the fifth suicide attack in Afghanistan in three days.

The suspect, whose name and nationality were not disclosed, had pictures of slain Taliban leader Mullah Dadullah in his phone, as well as text messages from a foreign country, Afghan officials said.

In Uruzgan province, Mullah Ahmidullah Khan, the head of the provincial council, said the clashes in the Chora district had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

Lt.-Col. Maria Carl, a spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force, said there is "definitely a large engagement" going on but could not confirm figures.

Netherlands defence chief Gen. Dick Berlijn said a Dutch soldier was killed in a battle that started over the weekend with Taliban fighters near Chora. Dutch troops had been providing backup to local forces in and around Chora since Saturday, when several hundred Taliban fighters began launching attacks on police posts, he said.

On Sunday in eastern Paktika province, in an operation backed by Afghan troops, coalition warplanes targeted a compound that also contained a mosque and an Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys, aged 10 to 16.

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," spokesman Maj. Chris Belcher said.

Afghan fighting kills 100 TALIBAN LAUNCHING ATTACKS ON POLICE IN SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF URUZGAN

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has sent a team to investigate. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Afghan fighting kills 100 TALIBAN LAUNCHING ATTACKS ON POLICE IN SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF U

Tape says suicide bombers headed here

SOURCETAG 0706190641
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 19
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
WORD COUNT: 166

There's a report that large teams of newly trained suicide bombers are being sent from Afghanistan to Canada, the United States and other countries.

ABC News is reporting the recruits were introduced at an al-Qaida/Taliban training camp graduation ceremony in Afghanistan earlier this month.

According to the network, a Pakistani journalist was invited to attend and take pictures as some 300 recruits, including boys as young as 12, were supposedly sent off on their suicide missions.

There was no independent confirmation of the report.

But the network has posted a video on its website, which it says shows Taliban military commander Mansoor Dadullah introducing and congratulating each team as they stood. Dadullah's brother was killed by U.S. forces last month.

ABC quoted Dadullah as saying, "These Americans, Canadians, British and Germans come here to Afghanistan from faraway places. Why shouldn't we go after them?"

The leader of the team assigned to attack Great Britain spoke in English.

"So let me say something about why we are going, along with my team, for a suicide attack in Britain," he said.

"Whether my colleagues, companions and Muslim brothers die today or tonight, every drop of our blood will invigorate the Muslim (unintelligible)."

The report comes at a time when resurgent Taliban fighters are stepping up attacks on coalition and Afghan forces inside the country. KEYWORDS=WORLD

DND boosts burial bucks

SOURCETAG 0706190628
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 8
BYLINE: CP
WORD COUNT: 211

Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan will now be treated the same as fallen RCMP officers when it comes to their funerals.

The Defence Department quietly confirmed yesterday that it has more than doubled the burial stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty, bringing the military in line with support the Mounties offer members.

The new rate of \$12,700 came into effect June 1 amid an uproar over unpaid funeral expenses, but will be retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began its involvement in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001.

DECADE-OLD POLICY

It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier directed the military's casualty support centre to write to the families of Canadians who've died since 2001 to ensure they submit claims for the items that had not been previously covered and to verify whether they, too, suffered a shortfall.

Spokeswoman Isabelle Bouchard said defence staff modelled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty.

The RCMP policy was last updated in November 2006 and a spokeswoman said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies of all their funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current." **KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

Archeology in the cards for U.S. troops

SOURCETAG 0706190555
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 21
BYLINE: AP
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
WORD COUNT: 111

The Pentagon is sending another deck of playing cards to troops in Iraq, this time showing some of the country's most precious archeological sites instead of the most-wanted people.

Some 40,000 new decks of playing cards will be sent to troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Laurie Rush, an archeologist at Fort Drum in New York, says it's part of an awareness program to encourage troops to help preserve the heritage of those countries.

It's aimed at making troops aware they shouldn't pick up and bring home artifacts and also to avoid causing damage to sites.

In one incident after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, U.S. troops built a helicopter pad on the ruins of Babylon and filled their sandbags with archeological fragments from the ancient city.

Each card in the deck shows an artifact or site or gives a tip on how to help preserve antiquities.

"Drive around, not over, archeological sites," says the five of clubs. KEYWORDS=WORLD

DND boosts burial bucks

SOURCETAG 0706190551

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 20

BYLINE: CP

WORD COUNT: 211

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The RCMP policy was last updated in November 2006 and a spokeswoman said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies of all their funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current." **KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

Afghan fighting kills 100 Taliban launching attacks on police in southern province of Uruzgan

SOURCETAG 0706190526

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 285

More than 100 people, including militants, civilians and police, have died in three days of fierce clashes between NATO forces and Taliban fighters in Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, Afghan officials said yesterday.

Some preliminary estimates of the death toll exceeded 200 people, but precise numbers were not available because of the continued fighting.

In eastern Afghanistan, U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a compound suspected of housing al-Qaida militants, killing seven boys and several insurgents, officials said.

In the capital Kabul, police said they have detained a suspect in connection with the deadly Sunday bus bombing that killed at least 35 people, most of them police trainers, in the fifth suicide attack in Afghanistan in three days.

The suspect, whose name and nationality were not disclosed, had pictures of slain Taliban leader Mullah Dadullah in his phone, as well as text messages from a foreign country, Afghan officials said.

In Uruzgan province, Mullah Ahmadullah Khan, the head of the provincial council, said the clashes in the Chora district had killed 60 civilians, 70 suspected Taliban militants and 16 Afghan police.

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On Sunday in eastern Paktika province, in an operation backed by Afghan troops, coalition warplanes targeted a compound that also contained a mosque and an Islamic school, resulting in the death of seven boys, aged 10 to 16.

Coalition troops had "surveillance on the compound all day and saw no indications there were children inside," spokesman Maj. Chris Belcher said.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has sent a team to investigate. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Report says suicide squads coming to North America

SOURCETAG 0706190508
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 3
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
WORD COUNT: 122

There's a report that large teams of newly-trained suicide bombers are being sent from Afghanistan to Canada, the U.S. and other countries.

ABC News is reporting the recruits were introduced at an al-Qaida/Taliban training camp grad ceremony in Afghanistan this month.

According to the network, a Pakistani journalist was invited to attend and take pictures as some 300 recruits, including boys as young as 12, were supposedly sent off on their suicide missions.

The network has posted a video on its website, which it says shows Taliban military commander Mansoor Dadullah introducing and congratulating each team as they stood.

Dadaullah's brother was killed by U.S. forces last month.

ABC quoted Dadaullah as saying, "These Americans, Canadians, British and Germans come here to Afghanistan from faraway places. Why shouldn't we go after them?"

The report comes at a time when resurgent Taliban fighters are stepping up attacks on coalition and Afghan forces inside the country. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Study calls for Afghan mission debate

IDNUMBER 200706190035
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: National
PAGE: B7
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 255

OTTAWA — Parliament should immediately debate whether the Canadian Forces commitment to Afghanistan should be extended beyond February 2009, says a Commons defence committee study released Monday.

The all-party committee also said more needs to be done to ensure aid and reconstruction dollars are delivered in a more timely manner to Afghans, especially after some particularly heavy fighting last year.

"None of the witnesses who appeared before the committee expected the military problem in Afghanistan to be solved by February 2009," states the report, the result of a 13-month study of a controversial mission, which has divided Canadians and claimed the lives of 57 soldiers and one diplomat.

"Some spoke of decades; some spoke of generations; but all spoke of a long-term commitment. This raises the question of whether the mission mandate ought to be extended or not."

The committee recommended the government hold a debate "without delay" to give Canadians "an accurate and up-to-date understanding" of the mission and its "decision-making" around the February 2009 deadline.

That date has been a bone of contention among the four federal parties. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has strongly suggested the mission will have to be extended beyond 2009 and has criticized the opposition for calling for arbitrary withdrawal dates.

Moreover, the Forces top commander in Afghanistan recently said the military is making contingency plans beyond 2009.

The Liberals want Canada to serve notice to its NATO partners that it will give up its dangerous mission in volatile southern Afghanistan, perhaps in favour of a less violent part of the country, by 2009.

Canada contributes 2,500 of the 12,000 NATO troops in the south, the report says.

"If we leave, someone else will have to carry the load," the report states.

U.S. regrets airstrike deaths of seven boys

IDNUMBER 200706190007
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: D8
COLUMN: World in Brief
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
SOURCE: The StarPhoenix
WORD COUNT: 117

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military on Monday expressed regret over the deaths of seven Afghan children in an airstrike a day earlier but blamed Islamic insurgents for preventing the youngsters from leaving the compound that was hit.

American officials said U.S.-led coalition forces were unaware of the presence of noncombatants inside the compound in Paktika province, which also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic seminary.

Seven boys under the age of 16, including at least one as young as 10, were killed in Sunday's airstrike, according to Afghan officials.

Paktika Gov. Akhram Akhpelwak told the Associated Press that in a departure from usual practice, local Afghan officials were not given advance notice of Western troops' plans to hit the compound.

Ousted female MP criticizes U.S. role

IDNUMBER 200706190004
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: D8
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Reuters / Malalai Joya;
DATELINE: NEW YORK
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 459

NEW YORK (Reuters) — The United States is making a mockery of democracy and the war on terrorism by supporting corrupt Afghan lawmakers who are criminals and warlords, said an outspoken female Afghan politician, who was removed from parliament.

Malalai Joya, 29, was effectively expelled last month when the lower house of parliament voted to suspend her for the remaining 3 1/2 years of her term after she described the legislative body as "worse than a stable" during an interview.

Washington "supports the same enemies, who are mentally like the Taliban. . . . They brought them back into power," soft-spoken Joya told Reuters in an interview during her first visit to the United States.

"This is the wrong policy. Do not support fundamentalist warlords," she said. "Every day for the people of Afghanistan is Sept. 11. Please pressure your government to change this policy, it is a mockery of democracy, it is a mockery of the war on terror."

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 hijacked airliner attacks on New York and Washington to oust the Taliban government after it failed to surrender Osama bin Laden, leader of the Islamist al Qaeda network.

Afghanistan has been fractured by rival warlords since the Soviet Union pulled out in 1989 and its lower house of parliament, elected in 2005, is full of ex-warlords and former militia leaders along with suspected drug dealers.

'RAPE HER'

Dressed in a grey pinstriped suit with her dark hair pulled back in a ponytail and sitting in the New York offices of Human Rights Watch, Joya said the parliament had kicked her out so she could no longer oppose and expose their actions.

"Many, many times they insulted me, even inside of the parliament they threw water at me and they threatened me with death, and one of them shouted, 'Take her and rape her,' " she said. "They turned off my microphone.

"This is a completely non-democratic parliament, they stand up against the constitution and they do non-democratic acts," she said ahead of the screening of a documentary about her 2005 election campaign at the Human Rights Watch film festival.

One such act was a proposal in the lower house of parliament for a blanket amnesty for those who committed war crimes over nearly 30 years of conflict. She asked, "How can criminals forgive themselves?"

Joya said the Afghan people had been hopeful the U.S.-led invasion "would bring democracy for them and security for them and many more things like that, but unfortunately we are looking at a worse situation than the Taliban period."

Last year was the bloodiest in Afghanistan since the U.S.-led invasion and, while a threatened spring offensive by insurgents has not materialized, violence has continued through suicide bombings and other attacks.

Despite death threats, Joya vowed to fight on for her people and to stand in the next election.

"I will continue more and more with my struggle because most of my people are with me," she said.

Emancipation elusive for Kandahar women; Religious leaders' influence, customs still limit women in birthplace of the Taliban

IDNUMBER 200706190002
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: D8
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Reuters / Wearing a burka is no longer mandatory in Afghanistan, but many women will not appear in public without the fully concealing outfit ; Colour Photo: Runa Tareen ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Tom Blackwell
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 573

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — They may no longer run the government, but southern Afghanistan's influential religious leaders continue to make life painfully hard for women, says Kandahar's new director of women's affairs.

Preaching a false brand of Islam, the mullahs are helping prop up a culture that treats female members like "a piece of meat," Runa Tareen said in an interview with CanWest News Service.

She acknowledged that women in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban, have made some progress since the Islamist regime fell, especially in terms of winning renewed access to education and jobs.

However, forced marriages, unchecked domestic abuse and restrictive dress codes are still common, largely due to age-old customs and what Tareen called false messages emerging from the area's mosques.

"Everybody listens to the mullah because the mullah is the only person that everyone respects. He knows the Koran, he knows Islam," she said.

"It is up to the religious people to tell families what Islam provides for women's rights. But, unfortunately, they are not teaching people respect for women."

Tareen is nothing if not brave. Simply by occupying the government-appointed post, let alone chastising the powerful religious establishment, she has put herself in harm's way.

The 34-year-old assumed the job last October, 18 days after her predecessor, Safia Ahmed-jan, was assassinated just outside her home in Kandahar.

Tareen, however, is fatalistic about the risks of promoting female rights in the city where the Taliban first barred women from working outside the home, going to school, or appearing in public with their faces exposed. Muslims believe the day of their death is preordained, she said, so why fret about when that time will come?

Tareen is part of a broader effort by Afghanistan's new government to reverse the trampling of women's rights that became a hallmark of the Taliban regime.

Since 2001, girls have been readmitted to schools, and jobs, at least in government and with non-governmental organizations, are again open to women. Even this region, though among the most conservative in the country, has seen advances. The director of Kandahar's main hospital, for instance, is a respected female surgeon.

About half of the girls in Kandahar City attend school now, said Tareen, while women have a better chance of finding work outside the home. But she added the situation is different in rural Kandahar province, with many parents still failing to see the value of educating their daughters. Indeed, throughout the province, enduring Pashtun customs relegate women to the status of second-class citizens.

They frequently have no choice in whom they wed and are often married off to men who are much older, or otherwise unsuitable. It's common for wives to be kept isolated from their families and refused medical treatment, while spousal beatings are widespread and usually go unpunished, Tareen said.

She said she knows of many women, fed up with such treatment, who have doused themselves with gasoline and set themselves on fire in grisly suicides.

"The community thinks a woman is like a piece of meat," Tareen said. "A woman is just for giving birth, for raising children. The people think, 'If we lose one woman, we can buy another one.' "

Mullahs know that Islam affords women a much higher status and they have a duty to preach that notion to their followers, she said. But they refuse to do so, partly out of fear that raising women's status, even slightly, would open the floodgates of change, Tareen charged.

Despite the slow progress, the women's-rights official is optimistic that a period of peace and stability, plus widely available education, could create a new generation that better respects women, and loosens some of the most restrictive customs.

(NATIONAL POST)

A dream stronger than death; Afghanistan–born Said Shiragha Rahimi died wanting to exhibit his political cartoons in Canada and to see his seven children graduate. The first will happen Saturday. And a community is coming together to help ensure Said's children get the education he so desperately wanted for them

IDNUMBER	200706190109
PUBLICATION:	The Hamilton Spectator
DATE:	2007.06.19
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	Local
PAGE:	A1
ILLUSTRATION:	Photo: Gary Yokoyama, the Hamilton Spectator / Said ShiraghaRahimi dreamt of two things: exhibiting his political cartoons and watching his seven children graduate. He lived to see neither. But many are working to make his dreams come true. From left his family, Amine, Hamide, Mohammad, Sakine, Fatema, wife Karime, Ahmad and Zahra. ; Photo: Said Shiragha Rahimi ; Photo: ;
BYLINE:	Jessica Mediarmid
SOURCE:	The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT:	© 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT:	288

Dreams have a way of disappearing when the dreamer dies.

But Said Shiragha Rahimi's dreams won't die. And so on Saturday, through the efforts of family, friends and strangers, there will be an exhibition of his political cartoons at a Hamilton arts centre.

Rahimi's wish to see his seven children graduate will never happen. But those same strangers are working to ensure the Afghan cartoonist's family will get the education he so wanted for them.

Shiragha Rahimi, his wife and children came to Canada in August 2005. He was killed in the early hours of Jan. 15 this year, struck by a CP rail train while delivering pizza. He was 35.

Carol Town is a teacher at Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School, where two of Rahimi's daughters were students.

She called on fellow teachers, artists, neighbours and friends, and they began organizing an exhibit of Rahimi's work.

One set up a trust fund for the children's education. Another arranged for prints to be made of 40 cartoons chosen by daughter Hamide. A local advertising firm made the prints free of charge. An artist in the group framed them.

A dream stronger than death; Afghanistan–born Said Shiragha Rahimi died wanting to exhibit his political ca

Town contacted prominent Canadian cartoonists Terry Mosher, Brian Gable, Roy Carless and The Spectator's Graeme MacKay, who all readily agreed to speak at the event and donate work.

Gary Santucci and Barbara Milne, owners of The Pearl Company arts centre on Steven Street, were happy to provide the venue. They joined forces with Hamilton's Immigrant Culture and Art Association.

Cartoons Speak: A Celebration and Exhibition of the Afghan political cartoons of Said Shiragha Rahimi will feature Afghan music, food and dancing. And the singing of the Rahimi children. The effort is an emotional point for a family still reeling.

Through tears and Hamide's interpretation, Rahimi's wife Karime explains: "I'm really proud of my husband and I'm really, really happy. It was one of his biggest dreams. I wish he was alive."

RELATED STORY: G0 15

FOR A SLIDESHOW ABOUT SAID SHIRAGHA RAHIMI GO TO WWW.THESPEC.COM

jmcdiarmid@thespec.com

905-526-3312

More than 100 dead in Afghan battle

IDNUMBER 200706190098
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Hamilton Spectator wire services
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 99

More than 100 people including militants, civilians, and police have been killed in a fierce, three-day battle between NATO troops and insurgents, Afghan officials said yesterday.

In a separate development, U.S.-led coalition jets bombed a suspected al-Qaida compound, killing seven boys as well as several fighters.

The Taliban assault is taking place in the south, in Uruzgan province.

Dutch military officials said hundreds of Taliban fighters have attacked police posts en masse, sparking a three-day battle which officials said was still continuing late yesterday.

Canada has about 2,500 troops operating mainly in Kandahar province. There have been no reports of Canadian involvement in the latest fighting.

RELATED STORY: A6

'Glaring omission' righted; Military more than doubles funeral allowance for soldiers

IDNUMBER 200706190094
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A6
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: THE CANADIAN PRESS / The casket carrying the body of Burlington-born Master Corporal Darrell Priede is carried into a church at CFB Gagetown last week. He was killed in Afghanistan. ;
DATELINE: Ottawa
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 495

Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan will now be treated the same as fallen RCMP officers when it comes to their funerals.

The Defence Department quietly confirmed yesterday that it has more than doubled the burial stipend given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty, bringing the military in line with support the Mounties offer members.

The new rate of \$12,700 came into effect June 1 amid an uproar over unpaid funeral expenses, but will be retroactive to all service members killed since Canada began its involvement in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001.

It has been nearly a decade since the military's death and disability benefits schedule, which allowed for \$4,675 in burial expenses, was revised. Several families of members killed in Afghanistan and elsewhere were forced to make up the difference between the funeral stipend and the actual burial cost.

In late May, The Canadian Press documented three cases of relatives coming up short — reports Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor initially dismissed. Angered by the brush-off, the parents of one fallen soldier, Corporal Matthew Dinning, came forward at a news conference on Parliament Hill to outline how they had asked for reimbursement twice in the year since their son had been killed.

A request for an interview with O'Connor was declined yesterday, but a spokeswoman emphasized the increase that the federal Treasury Board finally approved was something the minister had been seeking for many months.

"We got what we asked for," said Isabelle Bouchard.

The new benefits package also pays for items not previously covered, such as obituary notices, flowers and receptions following the service.

Bouchard said defence staff modelled the schedule on what the RCMP pays when its members are killed in the line of duty. Fifty-seven Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan and a handful of others have

died in training accidents.

Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier directed the military's casualty support centre to write to the families of Canadians who've died since 2001 to ensure they submit claims for the items that had not been previously covered and to verify whether they, too, suffered a shortfall.

Hillier also telephoned the Dinning family to apologize for not dealing with their concerns sooner.

"He said that now there is a centralized claim centre, whereas before each base commander handled the families' bills," said Lincoln Dinning, in an interview from his Wingham, Ont., home.

"We're glad we went public because we know that it will definitely help other families."

The RCMP policy, on which National Defence based its new schedule, was last updated in November 2006 and a spokeswoman said that families of officers killed in the line of duty are asked to submit copies all of their funeral expenses so the force can "ensure that the policy is kept current."

Liberal MP Dan McTeague said giving military families the same consideration as those with the RCMP was long overdue.

"It shouldn't take The Canadian Press to have raised this issue," he said.

"This was a glaring omission and the reality has been that it's only been through the anguish of families that these matters are brought to public attention."

Privately, Conservatives have been seething with frustration that they have borne the brunt of public embarrassment, saying the Liberals were in power for most of the last eight years.

The dream; Said Shiragha Rahimi came to Canada with hopes of showcasing his political cartoons and seeing his children get an education. A Hamilton community is ensuring his vision will be realized.

IDNUMBER 200706190027
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Journal
PAGE: G15
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Said Shiragha Rahimi's hard-hitting politicalcartoons will be exhibited in a celebration of his work on Saturday. Proceeds will go to the education of the late cartoonist's seven children. ; Photo: ;
BYLINE: Jessica Mcdiarmid
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 1574

Blood flows from Said Shiragha Rahimi's cartoons. Afghanistan, with two large footprints across its surface, one covered in an American flag, the other in a Union Jack, with blood seeping across the country. Small black footprints cross the nation, out of reach. That's al-Qaeda.

His work is aggressive and uncompromising, though some is more philosophical: a pen, symbolizing freedom of the press, wrapped in barbed wire, broken in places. At its tip, there is light.

The Afghan-born political cartoonist dreamed of an exhibition, of standing beside the art he worked so hard, risked so much, to create. He spent years making his way to Canada, where he could draw freely and his seven children could get the education he wanted for them.

After nearly a lifetime of waiting, Shiragha and his family landed in Canada in August 2005.

Shiragha struggled to support his family, but he also prepared to see his dream — drawing, searching for the perfect guest book for the exhibition. He bought a tuxedo.

But the Canadian dream disintegrated. The cartoonist, actor, playwright and comedian, who had fled Afghanistan and then Iran because he dared to speak out, who had snuck his family across borders at night so they might get to Canada where they all could have a better future, was killed delivering a pizza.

His vehicle was hit by a CP Rail train around 1:30 a.m. on Jan. 15 on his last delivery of the night. He died instantly.

Shiragha's story is one of struggle and tragedy, of dreams that took too long to come true. And it is a story of a community that embraced those dreams, willing them to reality.

Shiragha left Afghanistan as a teenager with his family, after the Soviets occupied the country. They moved to Iran, where he found childhood playmate Karime Hosseini.

The dream; Said Shiragha Rahimi came to Canada with hopes of showcasing his political cartoon and see

Over time, his family asked her parents if the two could marry but were turned down. Shiragha made a deal: they would ask Karime if she wanted to marry him, then abide by her wishes.

She said yes. They were married when Karime was 14, Shiragha, 17.

Shiragha began drawing political cartoons and soon found interest in his work. He won first prize in an Iranian exhibition, although organizers denied him the prize because he was Afghan. His cousin, an American citizen, arranged for an exhibit in the United States about six years ago. Without a passport, Shiragha could not go. He dreamed of holding an exhibit where he could stand beside his work.

Karime and Shiragha had three children in Iran before they moved to Pakistan to start a rug factory. Shiragha designed the rugs that Karime made by hand. Fatema, now 14, was born there. But the business failed and they returned home to Iran, where life was often made difficult by the prejudice toward the millions of Afghan refugees flooding the borders.

"But we're all humans, what's the point of insulting people?" Shiragha's daughter Hamide says today, repeating her father's words.

Shiragha wanted education for his children. He wanted to see them graduate from university, to have the chance to carve brighter futures for themselves.

The Rahimi family applied to come to Canada, where Shiragha could draw without fear of reprisal and where his children — six of them by then — could go to school. Their application was rejected, and the family felt Shiragha's cartoons, critical of United Nations' actions, may have played a part.

The refugee office closed down, and Shiragha felt pressure mounting against his art and his strong political views. The family had to leave.

In the fall of 2001, Shiragha gathered his family at midnight and walked across fields and through forests until morning, a man and woman with six children in tow, to Azerbaijan. Again, they applied to come to Canada.

Another son was born. The younger children went to school, but Shiragha couldn't pay the \$3,000 per child fee for the elder children. He wrote and performed plays and comedy, while Karime made jewellery, rugs and crafts.

Finally, in the summer of 2005, the Rahimis landed in Windsor, eventually making their way to Hamilton with the help of a distant relative, Mir Mahdavi, who is currently employed in the foreign-trained journalism program at The Hamilton Spectator.

Here, the two men would talk for hours about Afghanistan. Mahdavi describes Shiragha as a very religious man who believed in separation between state and religion, a view repeatedly expressed in his cartoons.

He opposed foreign occupation in the country, and he wanted independent artists to be able to criticize the government. "He was trying to show the way we can catch a real, independent Afghanistan."

Shiragha's heart remained tied to the political turmoil in his home country. He felt ethically bound to react to its struggles and distribute his cartoons for free to the media there.

He drew at night, refusing to let his family see his work until it was complete. Then, he would call them in, and explain the symbols, the colours and ask them what they thought.

A week before he died, Shiragha applied for an exhibition grant from the local Hamilton group, Immigrant

The dream; Said Shiragha Rahimi came to Canada with hopes of showcasing his political cartoon and see

Culture and Art Association. He forgot the support materials, said director Yar Taraky, and promised to bring cartoon samples the following week.

Detective Constable Steve Ellis investigated the scene that night. The signals were working, the train was travelling within the speed limit. The road was dry, the sky clear.

Eyewitnesses said the vehicle didn't slow down or speed up as it approached the tracks. It just drove into the path of a westbound freight train.

It was late, and Shiragha worked a lot.

"It could have been that he was overtired," said Ellis. "I guess we'll never know for sure."

Shiragha hadn't been delivering pizza long. It wasn't something he wanted to do, but he couldn't get full-time work or make money with his cartoons, and he needed to support his family.

Gary Santucci, who sits on the board of directors at the Immigrant Culture and Art Association, said Shiragha's struggle to survive in Canada is a common experience for immigrants, who often find themselves frustrated in menial jobs despite their talents and education.

They come hoping for opportunity and find it's not there.

"We might as well start talking about that now, that a talented artist who was forced to flee his country for his political views was killed delivering pizza."

If the family struggled before Shiragha's death, it has been harder since. It doesn't take long for Hamide, 19, and her mother to start to cry.

"In our family, we were always with my dad," said Hamide, sitting on the couch of the three-bedroom highrise apartment in north Hamilton, where they all live.

"Everything we did was with my dad, everywhere we went."

Shiragha's death demonstrates the need for a better support system for immigrants, said Mahdavi.

"Immigrant people are a kind of homeless people," he said. "They can't continue the life they had in their homeland. They begin from zero."

The morning Shiragha died, Yar Taraky went to the Rahimi's apartment. The first thing he remembers saying was that he wanted to show Shiragha's work. He talked to each of the children. He told them they had to remember their father's dream that they get an education.

"I told them, in this country, they would always have support. I told them the society was beside them and they would not be left alone."

A community of support has rallied around the Rahimi family. Teachers, artists, journalists and friends have teamed up to create a fundraising event this Saturday that will exhibit Shiragha's work, as well as that of other well-known Canadian cartoonists.

It is the exhibition he dreamed of for so long. The money raised will go toward Shiragha's other dream, education for his children.

The dream; Said Shiragha Rahimi came to Canada with hopes of showcasing his political cartoon and see

Shiragha's eldest daughter, Amine, gave birth two weeks ago. Hamide got her licence and drives for the family. She has taken over one of her father's projects, a magazine for the Afghan community called The Truth.

She worked on the first issue until 3 a.m. for three months, doing everything from designing ads to writing and editing, until 2,000 copies finally rolled off the press. The cover is based on the design her father was working on when he died.

In Grade 11, Hamide wants to become a surgeon. One of her sisters wants to be a fashion designer, one of her brothers, an animator. There are five girls, two boys, between the ages of four and 21. All of them are artists.

Karime finds it hard to adjust to life in Canada. She started working a month ago to support her family. When her husband was alive, she felt they were the luckiest, happiest family in the world.

She is happy his work will finally be hung upon gallery walls through the support of a community that has embraced the family. She wishes Shiragha was here to stand beside it.

"He was a perfect example of a perfect father and husband. He was kind and respectful of everyone, no matter if you were big or small," she said, weeping. "We will try to keep going in life and we hope that he would be satisfied with what we do."

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Political cartoonists speak:

"(Rahimi's cartoons) are very subtle and very deep. You can interpret them in many ways.

"He's more of an artistic cartoonist than a lot of Western cartoonists. We rely on the gag, caricatures. Rahimi's work is more art. It's almost like a higher level of cartooning."

— Graeme MacKay,

The Hamilton Spectator

"There is definitely an international community spirit where cartoonists support each other.

"(Cartooning) is something that's linked very much to the spirit of democracy, that as people we make mistakes, nobody's perfect. Cartoons point out those mistakes, in the voice of the people."

— Brian Gable, the Globe and Mail

"Cartoons point out weaknesses. Usually, the stronger and more democratic a society, the more capability they have for laughing at their weaknesses.

"Cartooning has always been a very important part of the public debate."

—Terry Mosher (Aislin), the Gazette (Montreal)

Need to know

The dream; Said Shiragha Rahimi came to Canada with hopes of showcasing his political cartooning and see

What: Cartoons Speak: A Celebration and Exhibition of the Afghani political cartoons of Said Shiragha Rahimi Where: The Pearl Company, 16 Steven St. (at the east end of King William Street) When: 7 to 10 p.m., Saturday Tickets: \$30, at Bryan Prince Bookseller (King Street West), Arts Hamilton (Jackson Square), The Carnegie Gallery (King Street West, Dundas), La Jardiniere (Locke Street South), OPIRG (McMaster University), The Hamilton Spectator (Frid Street), the Immigrant Culture and Art Association (Stuart Street) and at the door. To donate: Make a deposit in the name of Karime Hosseini Rahimi at a TD Bank (account no. 1026339535). For more information: e-mail cartoonsspeak@gmail.com or call 905-524-0606.

Afghan debate urged; Mission length may need to go past 2009

IDNUMBER 200706190061
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Ahmad Masood, Reuters / **COMMITMENT:** An Afghangirl rides on the back of a donkey cart, loaded with things to be used for recycling, in Kabul Monday. ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 391

OTTAWA – Parliament should immediately debate whether the Canadian Forces' commitment to Afghanistan should be extended beyond February 2009, says a Commons defence committee study released Monday.

The all-party committee also said more needs to be done to ensure aid and reconstruction dollars are delivered in a more timely manner to Afghans, especially after some particularly heavy fighting last year.

"None of the witnesses who appeared before the committee expected the military problem in Afghanistan to be solved by February 2009," states the report, the result of a 13-month study of a controversial mission, which has divided Canadians and claimed the lives of 57 soldiers and one diplomat. "Some spoke of decades; some spoke of generations; but all spoke of a long-term commitment. This raises the question of whether the mission mandate ought to be extended or not."

The committee recommended the government hold a debate "without delay" to give Canadians "an accurate and up-to-date understanding" of the mission and its "decision-making" around the February 2009 deadline.

That date has been a bone of contention among the four federal parties. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has strongly suggested the mission will have to be extended beyond 2009 and has criticized the opposition for calling for arbitrary withdrawal dates.

Moreover, the Forces' top commander in Afghanistan recently said the military is making contingency plans beyond 2009.

The Liberals want Canada to serve notice to its NATO partners that it will give up its dangerous mission in volatile southern Afghanistan, perhaps in favour of a less violent part of the country, by 2009.

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said the Liberals pushed for an immediate debate on the future of the mission because the military needs the 18 remaining months in its current mandate to plan for the future.

"Rotation is in order," Coderre said. "We're an alliance. When a country leaves, there's a replacement." The NDP wants an immediate withdrawal of troops and reiterated that view in a dissenting opinion.

The report suggests that Canada could disappoint its allies in southern Afghanistan, which include the U.S., Britain, the Netherlands, Australia and others, if it decides to leave Kandahar. Canada contributes 2,500 of the 12,000 NATO troops in the south, the report says.

"If we leave, someone else will have to carry the load," the report states.

The top three recommendations of the report focused on ways to speed the flow of reconstruction dollars to both the military-dominated Provincial Reconstruction Team and to international organizations.

Canadian troops driving in style in DCX Actros

IDNUMBER 200706190055
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Automotive
PAGE: B2
COLUMN: Automotive Briefs
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: SAFE: The Canadian Forces puts its trust in heavily armoured Mercedes-Benz Actros trucks. ;
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 215

Want to one-up that guy who never shuts up about his Hummer H2 and how the brand's military heritage makes it so tough? Easy: park a Mercedes-Benz Actros in your driveway.

Not that you can simply walk into a Mercedes dealer and buy one (if you could, you'd need deep, deep pockets: the contract won by DaimlerChrysler to supply the vehicles was worth \$87 million), but the Actros was the winning vehicle in the Canadian Forces' Armoured Heavy Support Vehicle System (CF AHSVS) contest; 82 of them will be sent to Afghanistan starting this fall.

From the looks of it, we can think of few vehicles we'd rather see our troops getting around in while in combat.

The Actros is a cab-over design, so driver and passengers sit slightly forward of the front axle. There are four of those, for a total of eight wheels, all of which are driven. Forget 4x4 -- how does 8x8 sound?

The trucks ordered by the Forces are the Actros 4100 series, powered by a 16-litre turbo-diesel V-8 that makes 442 horsepower.

That doesn't sound like a whole heap of huzzah for an engine that big, but the torque figure should be something rather more spectacular.

We couldn't find exact specs for the Actros 4100, but based on what we could dredge up online, 1,700 lb.-ft. at about 1,100 r.p.m. is probably close. You'd need five Hummer H2s -- each with 365 lb.-ft. -- to beat that.

Canadian facing jail in Dubai just wanted to shop; Afghan anti-narcotics official stopped to buy gold watch, engagement ring

IDNUMBER 200706190111

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A9

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Handout Photo / Canadian anti-narcotics officer Bert Tatham was on his way home to meet Sara Gilmer when he was arrested in Dubai. ;

DATELINE: UNITED NATIONS

BYLINE: Steven Edwards

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen

WORD COUNT: 312

UNITED NATIONS – It was all for a gold watch -- and possibly an engagement ring.

Canadian anti-narcotics official Bert Tatham stopped off in Dubai on his way back from Afghanistan because he wanted to shop in the Arab emirate.

Instead of spending his planned day and a half there after arriving April 23, Dubai customs officials jailed him on suspicion of drug possession.

But his mother, Louise, 60, said yesterday "all this trouble" could have been avoided if he'd only listened to her.

"I'd told him to come straight back and to pass through Dubai, not stop off there," she said from the family home in Collingwood, Ont. "But he wanted to buy a gold watch, and probably an engagement ring."

Mr. Tatham, 35, had been heading back to Vancouver, where his girlfriend of almost two years, Sara Gilmer, 28, was scheduled to meet him at the airport April 25.

The couple is as good as engaged, but Mr. Tatham hasn't actually presented Ms. Gilmer with an engagement ring.

"Everyone in my life really loves Bert and thinks he's the perfect man for me," Ms. Gilmer said from her home in Victoria, where she works as a substitute elementary school teacher.

"We're not engaged, but I sure hope we get married when he gets home."

Mr. Tatham's father, Charlie, says his son is just as smitten, calling him "gaga" over Ms. Gilmer.

But in the short term, everything hinges on what a three-judge panel rules this morning after Mr. Tatham's defence lawyers argued at trial last week that his drug possession derived from peculiarities in his work.

"We're hopeful of a good judgment after we explained everything about the nature of his job," said Sharif Emara, legal adviser to Mr. Tatham's lawyer, Saeed Al-Ghailani.

If convicted, Mr. Tatham faces up to four years in prison, but the emirate also periodically grants mass amnesties.

Announced as humanitarian acts in the name of Dubai's ruler, His Highness Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, the most recent amnesty was at the end of May for 352 offenders of "different nationalities and serving terms for various crimes and misdemeanors."

Mr. Emara speculated a new amnesty could coincide with the month-long Islamic observance of Ramadan, which begins Sept. 12.

"That would be our hope if the verdict doesn't go his way, but it's not a done deal," said Mr. Tatham's mother.

Canadian facing jail in Dubai just wanted to shop; Afghan anti-narcotics official stopped to buy gold watch, engagement ring

IDNUMBER 200706190109

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Early

SECTION: News

PAGE: A9

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Handout Photo / Canadian anti-narcotics officer Bert Tatham was on his way home to meet Sara Gilmer when he was arrested in Dubai. ;

DATELINE: UNITED NATIONS

BYLINE: Steven Edwards

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen

WORD COUNT: 308

UNITED NATIONS – It was all for a gold watch -- and possibly an engagement ring.

Canadian anti-narcotics official Bert Tatham stopped off in Dubai on his way back from Afghanistan because he wanted to shop in the Arab emirate.

Instead of spending his planned day and a half there after arriving April 23, Dubai customs officials jailed him on suspicion of drug possession.

But his mother, Louise, 60, said yesterday "all this trouble" could have been avoided if he'd only listened to her.

"I'd told him to come straight back and to pass through Dubai, not stop off there," she said from the family home in Collingwood, Ont. "But he wanted to buy a gold watch, and probably an engagement ring."

Mr. Tatham, 35, had been heading back to Vancouver, where his girlfriend of almost two years, Sara Gilmer, 28, was scheduled to meet him at the airport April 25.

The couple is as good as engaged, but Mr. Tatham hasn't actually presented Ms. Gilmer with an engagement ring.

"Everyone in my life really loves Bert and thinks he's the perfect man for me," Ms. Gilmer said from her home in Victoria, where she works as a substitute elementary school teacher.

"We're not engaged, but I sure hope we get married when he gets home."

Mr. Tatham's father, Charlie, says his son is just as smitten, calling him "gaga" over Ms. Gilmer.

But in the short term, everything hinges on what a three-judge panel rules this morning after Mr. Tatham's defence lawyers argued at trial last week his drugs possession derived from peculiarities in his work.

Canadian facing jail in Dubai just wanted to shop; Afghan anti-narcotics official stopped to buy gold watch, e

"We're hopeful of a good judgment after we explained everything about the nature of his job," said Sharif Emara, legal adviser to Mr. Tatham's lawyer, Saeed Al-Ghailani.

If convicted, Mr. Tatham faces up to four years in prison, but the emirate also periodically grants mass amnesties.

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Mr. Emara speculated a new amnesty could coincide with the month-long Islamic observance of Ramadan, which begins Sept. 12.

"That would be our hope if the verdict doesn't go his way, but it's not a done deal," said Mr. Tatham's mother.

U.S. blames Islamic insurgents for deaths of 7 children

IDNUMBER 200706190099
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
DATELINE: KABUL
SOURCE: The Los Angeles Times
WORD COUNT: 207

KABUL – The U.S. military yesterday expressed regret over the deaths of seven Afghan children in an airstrike a day earlier, but blamed Islamic insurgents for preventing the youngsters from leaving the compound that was hit.

American officials said U.S.-led coalition forces were unaware of the presence of noncombatants inside the compound in Paktika province, which also contained a mosque and a madrassa, or Islamic seminary.

Seven boys under the age of 16, including at least one as young as 10, were killed in Sunday's airstrike, according to Afghan officials. Paktika Gov. Akhram Akhpelwak told the Associated Press that in a departure from usual practice, Afghan officials were not given advance notice of western troops' plans to hit the compound.

Accidental civilian deaths at the hands of coalition troops have become a highly emotional issue in Afghanistan. The country's pro-western president, Hamid Karzai, has appealed repeatedly for greater caution in military operations in civilian areas, but public anger at his government is growing as well.

The compound, in the Zargun Shah district of Paktika province in southeastern Afghanistan, was believed to have been occupied by militants linked to al-Qaeda, the military said in a statement. It said several militants were killed in addition to the young boys.

Hold debate to extend Afghan mission beyond 2009: MPs panel; Canadians need 'up-to-date understanding' of the commitment

IDNUMBER 200706190098
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 485

Parliament should immediately debate whether the Canadian Forces commitment to Afghanistan should be extended beyond February 2009, says a Commons defence committee study released yesterday.

The all-party committee also said more needs to be done to ensure aid and reconstruction dollars are delivered in a more timely manner to Afghans, especially after some particularly heavy fighting last year.

"None of the witnesses who appeared before the committee expected the military problem in Afghanistan to be solved by February 2009," states the report, the result of a 13-month study of a controversial mission that has divided Canadians and claimed the lives of 57 soldiers and one diplomat.

"Some spoke of decades, some spoke of generations, but all spoke of a long-term commitment. This raises the question of whether the mission mandate ought to be extended or not."

The committee recommended the government hold a debate "without delay" to give Canadians "an accurate and up-to-date understanding" of the mission and its "decision-making" around the February 2009 deadline.

That date has been a bone of contention among the four federal parties. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has strongly suggested the mission will have to be extended beyond 2009, and has criticised the opposition for calling for arbitrary withdrawal dates.

Moreover, the Forces' top commander in Afghanistan recently said the military is making contingency plans beyond 2009.

The Liberals want Canada to serve notice to its NATO partners that it will give up its dangerous mission in volatile southern Afghanistan, perhaps in favour of a less violent part of the country, by 2009.

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said the Liberals pushed for an immediate debate on the future of the mission because the military needs the 18 remaining months in its current mandate to plan for the future.

"Rotation is in order," Mr. Coderre said. "We're an alliance. When a country leaves, there's a replacement."

The NDP wants an immediate withdrawal of troops and reiterated that view in a dissenting opinion.

The report suggests Canada could disappoint its allies in southern Afghanistan, which include the U.S., Britain, the Netherlands, Australia and others, if it decides to leave Kandahar. Canada contributes 2,500 of the 12,000 NATO troops in the south, the report says.

"If we leave, someone else will have to carry the load," the report states.

The top three recommendations of the report focused on ways to speed the flow of reconstruction dollars to the military-dominated Provincial Reconstruction Team, and to international organizations working to rebuild Afghanistan.

"While the Defence Department was able to make quick use of reconstruction money, the 'more substantial' funds that go through the Canadian International Development Agency 'were long in coming'," the report said.

In another development, the Defence Department announced yesterday that it was more than doubling the amount of money it gives the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty to \$12,700 from the previous \$4,600.

The move follows a controversy two weeks ago after some military families disclosed that they had to pay some of their own funeral expenses.

Isabelle Bouchard, spokeswoman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, said the military was working on the funeral spending increase long before it became a public controversy, and that the new guidelines are more flexible.

Mullahs impede emancipation of Afghan women; New Afghan director of women's affairs speaks out about her country's restrictive religious leaders, writes Tom Blackwell in Kandahar.

IDNUMBER 200706190097

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A12

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Tom Blackwell, National Post / Runa Tareen is Kandahar province's director of women's affairs. She took over the job in October 2006, 18 days after her predecessor, Safia Ahmed-jan, was assassinated. ;

BYLINE: Tom Blackwell

SOURCE: The National Post

WORD COUNT: 573

They may no longer run the government, but southern Afghanistan's influential religious leaders continue to make life painfully hard for women, says Kandahar's new director of women's affairs.

Preaching a false brand of Islam, the mullahs are helping prop up a culture that treats female members like "a piece of meat," Runa Tareen said in an outspoken interview with CanWest News Service.

She acknowledged that women in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban, have made some progress since the Islamist regime fell, especially in terms of winning renewed access to education and jobs.

However, forced marriages, unchecked domestic abuse and restrictive dress codes are still common, largely due to age-old customs and what Ms. Tareen called false messages emerging from the area's mosques.

"Everybody listens to the mullah because the mullah is the only person that everyone respects. He knows the Koran, he knows Islam," she said. "It is up to the religious people to tell families what Islam provides for women's rights ... But, unfortunately, they are not teaching people respect for women."

Ms. Tareen is nothing if not brave. Simply by occupying the government-appointed post, let alone chastising the powerful religious establishment, she has put herself in harm's way.

The 34-year-old assumed the job last October, 18 days after her predecessor, Safia Ahmed-jan, was assassinated just outside her home in Kandahar. Ms. Tareen, however, is fatalistic about the risks of promoting female rights in the city where the Taliban first barred women from working outside the home, going to school, or appearing in public with their faces exposed. Muslims believe the day of their death is preordained, she said, so why fret about when that time will come?

Ms. Tareen is part of a broader effort by Afghanistan's new government to reverse the trampling of women's rights that became a hallmark of the Taliban regime. Since 2001, girls have been readmitted to schools and jobs, at least in government and aid-work organizations. Even this region, though among the most conservative in the country, has seen advances. The director of Kandahar's main hospital, for instance, is a

respected female surgeon.

About half of girls in Kandahar City attend school now, said Ms. Tareen, while women have a better chance of finding work outside the home. But she said the situation is different in rural Kandahar province, with many parents still failing to see the value of educating their daughters.

Indeed, throughout the province, enduring Pashtun customs relegate women to the status of second-class citizens.

They frequently have no choice in whom they wed and are often married off to men who are much older, or otherwise unsuitable. It is common for wives to be kept isolated from their families and refused medical treatment, while spousal beatings are widespread and usually go unpunished, Ms. Tareen said.

"The community thinks a woman is like a piece of meat," Ms. Tareen said. "A woman is just for giving birth, for raising children. ... The people think, 'If we lose one woman, we can buy another one'."

Mullahs know Islam affords women a much higher status, and that they have a duty to preach that notion to their followers, she said. But they refuse to do so, partly out of fear that raising women's status, even slightly, would open the floodgates of change, Ms. Tareen charged.

Despite the slow progress, the women's rights official is optimistic that a period of peace and stability, and widely available education, could create a new generation that better respects women and loosens some of the most restrictive customs.

'PASS THROUGH DUBAI,' MOTHER TOLD TATHAM; DETAINED CANADIAN

IDNUMBER 200706190128
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: National
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A11
BYLINE: Steven Edwards
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 461

It was all for a gold watch — and possibly an engagement ring.

Canadian anti-narcotics official Bert Tatham stopped off in Dubai on his way back from Afghanistan because he wanted to shop in the Arab emirate.

Instead of spending his planned day and a half there after arriving on April 23, he was jailed by Dubai customs officials on suspicion of drugs possession.

But his mother, Louise, said yesterday "all this trouble" could have been avoided if he had only listened to her.

"I'd told him to come straight back and to pass through Dubai, not stop off there," the 60-year-old mother of three said from the family home in Collingwood.

"But he wanted to buy a gold watch, and probably an engagement ring."

Mr. Tatham, 35, had been heading back to his home in Vancouver, where his girlfriend of almost two years, Sara Gilmer, 28, was scheduled to meet him at the airport on April 25.

The couple is as good as engaged, but Mr. Tatham has not actually presented Ms. Gilmer with an engagement ring.

"Everyone in my life really loves Bert and thinks he's the perfect man for me," Ms. Gilmer said from her home in Victoria, where she works as a substitute elementary school teacher. "We're not engaged, but I sure hope we get married when he gets home."

Mr. Tatham's father, Charlie, says his son is just as smitten, calling him "gaga" over Ms. Gilmer. But in the short term, everything hinges on what a three-judge panel rules this morning after Mr. Tatham's defence lawyers argued at trial last week his drugs possession derived from peculiarities in his work.

"We're hopeful of a good judgment after we explained everything about the nature of his job," said Sharif Emara, legal advisor to Mr. Tatham's lawyer, Saeed Al-Ghailani.

Court documents translated from Arabic show Mr. Tatham was tried for "bringing and holding brain intoxicating substances in the intention of using [them]." If convicted, he faces up to four years in prison, but the emirate also periodically grants mass amnesties.

Announced as humanitarian acts in the name of Dubai's ruler, His Highness Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, the most recent was at the end of May for 352 offenders of "different nationalities and serving terms for various crimes and misdemeanours."

Mr. Emara speculated a new amnesty could coincide with the month-long Islamic observance of Ramadan, which this year begins on Sept. 12. Mr. Tatham's parents say they would call for stepped-up help from the Department of Foreign Affairs if their son is convicted.

The couple lives in the Simcoe-Grey riding of Foreign Affairs secretary of state Helena Guergis, who coincidentally wrote to Mr. Tatham in January ahead of her trip to Afghanistan to praise him for his work in the country. Jail conditions for Mr. Tatham are apparently adequate, but he has little to do.

"It's not a matter of just dropping off reading materials, for instance. They have to be vetted," said Michael Cullip, a Dubai-based engineering executive who formerly worked for the engineering consulting company Mr. Tatham's father runs in Collingwood.

KEYWORDS: CRIME; UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Afghan women treated 'like a piece of meat'; New government appointee takes on mullahs

IDNUMBER 200706190119

PUBLICATION: National Post

DATE: 2007.06.19

EDITION: National

SECTION: World

PAGE: A15

ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Shah Marai, AFP, Getty Images / YoungAfghan women participate in a Dari language class at school in Kabul. About half the girls in Kandahar City attend school now. ; Black & White Photo: Tom Blackwell, National Post / Runa Tareen. ;

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

BYLINE: Tom Blackwell

SOURCE: National Post

WORD COUNT: 635

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – They may no longer run the government, but southern Afghanistan's influential religious leaders continue to make life painfully hard for women, says Kandahar's new director of women's affairs.

Preaching a false brand of Islam, the mullahs are helping prop up a culture that treats female members like "a piece of meat," Runa Tareen said in an outspoken interview.

She acknowledged that women in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban, have made some progress since the Islamist regime fell, especially in terms of winning renewed access to education and jobs.

However, forced marriages, unchecked domestic abuse and restrictive dress codes are still common, largely because of age-old customs and what she called false messages emerging from the area's mosques.

"Everybody listens to the mullah because the mullah is the only person that everyone respects. He knows the Koran, he knows Islam," Ms. Tareen said.

"It is up to the religious people to tell families what Islam provides for women's rights ... But, unfortunately, they are not teaching people respect for women."

She is nothing if not brave. Simply by occupying the government-appointed post, let alone chastising the powerful religious establishment, she has put herself in harm's way.

The 34-year-old took on the job last October, 18 days after her predecessor, Safia Ahmed-jan, was assassinated just outside her home in Kandahar. "It was very painful for us," the new director said. "It was a great loss."

Her bodyguard asks to search a foreign reporter's satchel, noting it was two men posing as journalists who assassinated Ahmed Shah Masood, the legendary Northern Alliance leader.

However, Ms. Tareen is fatalistic about the risks of promoting female rights in the city where the Taliban first

barred women from working outside the home, going to school, or appearing in public with their faces exposed. Muslims believe the day of their death is preordained, she said, so why fret about when that time will come?

She is part of a broader effort by Afghanistan's new government to reverse the trampling of women's rights that became a hallmark of the Taliban regime.

Since 2001, girls have been readmitted to schools, and jobs, at least in government and with non-governmental organizations, are again open to women.

Even this region, though among the most conservative in the country, has seen advances. The director of Kandahar's main hospital, for instance, is a respected female surgeon.

About half the girls in Kandahar City attend school now, said Ms. Tareen, while women have a better chance of finding work outside the home. But she added the situation is different outside the city, with many parents still failing to see the value of educating their daughters. Indeed, throughout the province, enduring Pashtun customs relegate women to the status of second-class citizens.

They frequently have no choice over whom they wed and are often married off to men who are much older or otherwise unsuitable. It's common for wives to be kept isolated from their families and refused medical treatment, while spousal beatings are widespread and usually go unpunished, Ms. Tareen said.

She said she knows of many women, fed up with such treatment, who have doused themselves with gasoline and set themselves on fire in grisly suicides.

"The community thinks a woman is like a piece of meat," she said.

"A woman is just for giving birth, for raising children ... The people think, 'If we lose one woman, we can buy another one.' "

Mullahs know that Islam affords women a much higher status and they have a duty to preach that notion to their followers, she said. But they refuse to do so, partly out of fear that raising women's status, even slightly, would open the floodgates of change.

As for the burka, there is no longer a law making the fully concealing outfit mandatory. But while many Kabul women now appear in public with just a scarf covering their hair, it is still rare to see a woman outdoors in Kandahar not wearing a burka.

Despite the slow progress, the women's rights official is optimistic that a period of peace and stability, plus widely available education, could create a new generation that better respects women and loosens some of the most restrictive customs.

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

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KEYWORDS: WOMEN; WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Ottawa. Debate urged on extending mission to Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200706190121
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
COLUMN: Fast Track
KEYWORDS: FOREIGN AID; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 116

Parliament should immediately debate whether the Canadian Forces commitment to Afghanistan should be extended beyond February 2009, says a Commons defence committee study issued yesterday. The all-party committee also said more needs to be done to ensure aid and reconstruction dollars are delivered in a more timely manner to Afghans, especially after some particularly heavy fighting last year. "None of the witnesses who appeared before the committee expected the military problem in Afghanistan to be solved by February 2009," stated the report, the result of a 13-month study of the controversial mission, which has divided Canadians.

Canadian awaits verdict in Dubai; Could get 4 years for dried poppies, 0.6 grams of hash

IDNUMBER 200706190109
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.06.19
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A16
KEYWORDS: CRIME; UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
DATELINE: UNITED NATIONS
BYLINE: STEVEN EDWARDS
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 317

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The couple is as good as engaged, but Tatham hasn't actually presented Gilmer with an engagement ring.

"Everyone in my life really loves Bert and thinks he's the perfect man for me," Gilmer said from her home in Victoria, where she works as a substitute elementary school teacher.

"We're not engaged, but I sure hope we get married when he gets home."

In the short term, everything hinges on what a three-judge panel rules this morning after Tatham's defence lawyers argued at trial last week that his drugs possession derived from peculiarities in his work.

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If convicted, he faces up to four years in prison, but the emirate also periodically grants mass amnesties.

Emara speculated a new amnesty could coincide with the month-long Islamic observance of Ramadan, which this year begins Sept. 12.

"That would be our hope if the verdict doesn't go his way, but it's not a done deal," said Tatham's mother.

During a "detail check" at the airport, officers found 0.6 grams of hashish and two dried poppy flowers that Tatham said he intended to use as lecture props.

Although Tatham argued the poppies had no utility in drug production, the court documents list them as a banned substance in the Arab emirate.