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**DATE:** 2007.08.23

**PUBLICATION:** cpw

**WORD COUNT:** 296

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^Statement by the Minister of National Defence on the Deaths of Two C@<

August 23, 2007

OTTAWA, ONTARIO--(Marketwire – Aug. 22, 2007) – The Honourable Peter Gordon MacKay, Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, issued the following statement today on the deaths of two Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter, and the wounding of one soldier and two members of the media:

"I am deeply saddened by the loss of two Canadian soldiers who died today in Afghanistan. I would like to extend my condolences to the families and loved ones of Master Corporal Christian Duchesne and of the remaining soldier, whose name is being temporarily withheld at the request of the family. My thoughts and prayers are with them during this time of great sorrow. I also wish a speedy recovery to the soldier injured in this incident.

These soldiers were participating in a joint operation to further stabilize an area west of Kandahar City with the aim to strengthen security conditions so that meetings can be held with local elders and authorities to facilitate reconstruction projects. These soldiers were helping to bring back hope to a population that has seen much hardship and turmoil. Their actions have brought hope to this oppressed people.

My sympathies also go to the two members of the media injured in today's attack, and to their families. Our condolences also go to the family of the Afghan interpreter who lost his life in the incident.

Let us never forget these brave soldiers, whose self-sacrifice served to make life better for others."

Master Corporal Christian Duchesne was a member of 5e Ambulance de campagne, Royal 22e Regiment, based out of Valcartier, Quebec.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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After hours: 613-792-2973

Website: [www.forces.gc.ca](http://www.forces.gc.ca)

INDUSTRY: Government – International, Government – Local,  
Government – National, Government – Security (law enforcement,  
homeland etc), Government – State

SUBJECT: NWS

NEWS RELEASE TRANSMITTED BY Marketwire

# Taliban ambush in southern Afghanistan leaves 10 Afghan guards dead

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 554

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KABUL (AP) \_ The Taliban ambushed a convoy carrying supplies for NATO-led troops in southern Afghanistan on Thursday, killing 10 Afghan guards, an official with the convoy said.

The trucks were attacked near Qalat city, in Zabul province, as they were travelling on the main Kabul-Kandahar highway, said Mohammad Salim, an official with the private security company, who witnessed the attack.

At least 10 guards were killed and three vehicles destroyed in the ambush, Salim said.

In other violence, the insurgents detonated a bomb next to a convoy carrying the police chief of violence-plagued Helmand province, killing three passers-by and wounding 13 others, the chief said. Five of the wounded were reportedly in critical condition.

Meanwhile, a German engineer held hostage by the Taliban for more than a month appeared on Afghan television Thursday, coughing and holding his chest while appealing for help.

The hostage shown on privately owned Tolo TV, was one of two German engineers and five Afghans abducted on July 18 in Wardak province in central Afghanistan. The other German was found dead of gunshot wounds July 21, while one of the Afghans managed to escape.

"I am a prisoner of the Taliban," said the man, who identified himself as Rudolf Blechschmidt. "We live in the mountains, very high in a very bad condition, please help us."

Tolo TV did not say how it obtained the video, and there was no indication of when it was shot.

The German Foreign Ministry in Berlin said it was checking contents of the video. "It (the Foreign Ministry) continues to work intensively to secure the hostage's release," a spokesman said.

One of the Afghan hostages also appeared in the video and asked for the government's help.

"Think of our children," the unidentified man said. "Only God and (President Hamid) Karzai can help us now."

Blechschmidt was filmed lying on his side on a black rug. He appeared to be in pain, stopping to cough deeply and clutching his chest.

"The Taliban try to negotiate with the Afghan government but the government not talk with the Taliban," Blechschmidt said, speaking in broken English. "... If the time is over, they want kill us."

The captors have demanded in the past that Germany withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.

Abductions have become a key insurgent tactic in recent months in trying to destabilize the country, targeting both Afghan officials and foreigners helping with reconstruction. A group of 23 South Korean aid workers were taken hostage last month. Two of the Koreans were killed, two were released and the rest remain captive.

Thursday's roadside bomb was triggered by remote control in the town of Gereshk when Helmand Police Chief Mohammad Hussein passed by in a convoy of several cars, said Hussein, who was not hurt in the attack.

Helmand is the scene of major NATO-led military operations against the Taliban and other insurgents. It is also the country's largest producer of opium and accounts for much of the world's heroin trade.

Violence in Afghanistan is currently running at its highest level since U.S.-led forces invaded the country in 2001 to oust the Taliban for harbouring al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

The rebels carry out near-daily suicide attacks, roadside bombings and ambushes \_ especially in the east and south of the country \_ to undermine its western-backed government.

On Wednesday, a roadside bomb killed two Canadian troops and an Afghan interpreter travelling in an armoured vehicle in Kandahar province, a former Taliban stronghold. A Canadian TV cameraman was also injured in the attack.

The casualties \_ from Quebec province's Royal 22nd Regiment \_ bring to 69 the number of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan since 2002. Canada has about 2,300 troops in the country, mainly operating in Kandahar province.



# Ontario to dedicate Highway of Heroes in honour of soldiers felled in Afghanistan

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE SOCIAL TRANSPORT  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 438

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TORONTO (CP) \_ A stretch of Ontario highway that's become a sombre repatriation route for soldiers felled in Afghanistan, drawing impromptu gatherings of mourners saluting that sacrifice, is set to be renamed in their honour, the province said Thursday.

The 170-kilometre stretch of Highway 401 between the eastern Ontario airbase where the flag-drapped coffins of fallen soldiers arrive and the forensics centre in Toronto that receives them has been dubbed the Highway of Heroes.

More than 14,000 people have signed an electronic petition to officially rename that stretch of highway, where people gather on overpasses to wave flags, display placards of support, and salute the processions of hearses and limousines.

On Thursday, Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield said there were "no barriers to making this happen."

"I think when you consider the sacrifice that the soldiers and others have made, it's just a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on that sacrifice and to be able to acknowledge it," Cansfield said in a phone interview.

"There's no reason not to do it. All we need to do now is get into the process of how quickly we can do it."

Highway 401, the country's busiest, is currently named the MacDonald-Cartier Freeway. The government says it's considering several options in terms of dedicating a portion of the highway.

"We don't know whether we rename one little part of it or if we leave the name and have that part of it dedicated," said Jamie Rilett, Cansfield's spokesman.

"We're kind of early in the process to know which direction it's going to go, but there'll definitely be something dedicating that part of the highway to the fallen soldiers."

The cost to dedicate the highway with signs will be minimal, Rilett added.

Cansfield said the call to dedicate the highway came to her attention Wednesday when she was told about the online petition.

James Forbes, 22, who's behind the petition said he's surprised he's attracted so much attention.

"I am so happy," said Forbes, a London, Ont., resident who said he one day plans to enlist in the military.

Forbes said he's received a lot of feedback from military families who've travelled along Highway 401 following repatriation ceremonies at CFB Trenton.

“It seriously means absolutely everything to them,” Forbes said of the public displays of support. “It just shows the families that the country feels for their loss.”

Cansfield and Premier Dalton McGuinty are expected to discuss the highway dedication on Friday. McGuinty was previously involved in changing the name of an Ottawa highway to Veterans Memorial Highway.

The flag-draped coffin of the latest soldier to be killed in the war-torn country, Pte. Simon Longtin, was returned to CFB Trenton on Wednesday.

The highway procession that followed inspired the same impromptu outpouring of support from the public that's become associated with repatriations as people gathered on overpasses along the route.

It's a scene likely to be repeated in the coming days following Wednesday's loss of two more soldiers in Afghanistan.

Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance were killed when their transport vehicle.

Their caskets will be returned to CFB Trenton in the next few days.

# Bloc's Duceppe threatens to bring down government over Afghan mission

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICS DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 147

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MONTREAL (CP) \_ A Quebec military base is grieving after the death of two of its soldiers in Afghanistan.

Capt. Mathieu Dufour of CFB Valcartier near Quebec City said today the deaths are a ``tremendous shock" because the base is like a tightly knit family.

The two soldiers from Valcartier died in a roadside bomb on Wednesday, the same day the body of Quebecer Pte. Simon Longtin was brought back to Canada.

Meanwhile, Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe says he's ready to bring down Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government this fall if there's no firm commitment to withdraw Canadian troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Duceppe is also asking for an emergency debate on Canada's military role in Afghanistan when Parliament resumes on Sept. 17.

News of the deaths is being hashed out in today's newspaper columns and on Quebec's popular French-language talk radio stations, and most pundits are predicting Canada's involvement in Afghanistan will dominate Quebec's political scene in coming months.

# Canadian reporter who survives Afghan attack to leave the war-torn country

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 389

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KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) \_ A Radio-Canada reporter who survived a roadside bomb attack that killed two Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter said Thursday the horrific nature of the blast is hard to describe.

Patrice Roy, 44, told reporters at the Canadian base in Kandahar that he was writing his report inside the moving armoured vehicle just seconds before the explosion.

“It's a huge, huge blast. It's a scene that's difficult to imagine,” said the Ottawa-based reporter, adding that a medic sitting next to him was one of the two soldiers who died.

“It's scene that it's difficult to imagine \_ people were not panicking but it was so serious,” he said.

“... We didn't know if other mines would be there and we had to walk (through suspect ground) to get the body” he said.

The attack happened in the Zhari district about 50 kilometres west of Kandahar city on the first major combat operation for the Quebec-based Van Doos regiment in Afghanistan, codenamed Operation Eagle Eye.

Two Canadian soldiers were killed in the blast. Another Canadian soldier was wounded, along with Radio-Canada cameraman Charles Dubois, who had one of his legs amputated below the knee.

The dead soldiers were identified by the Defence Department as Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Field Ambulance unit, based in Valcartier, Que., and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the Royal 22nd Regiment, also based in Valcartier.

Roy says the explosion happened shortly after a minesweeper had finished clearing a track on the road so the convoy of tanks and armoured vehicles could follow.

Roy himself was treated for shock and released. He said he will leave Afghanistan to accompany Dubois, 29, to a U.S. military hospital in Germany and will not return to the war-torn country.

“My mission was to come (to Afghanistan) with Charles and to leave with Charles,” Roy said. “He needs care and I will leave with him. Beyond the journalistic mission, I have a moral commitment,” he said of his decision to stay at his cameraman's side.

Roy says his family had questioned his decision to go to the war-torn country, where 69 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed since 2002.

“It's difficult because, for them, it was the part of my mission that they underlined before the departure \_ ‘Why are you going there? It's too dangerous,’” Roy said.

Shortly after the explosion Roy tried to reach his wife in Canada to let her know he was OK.

Recalling his unkept promises to his family that he would be safe and that he would not go to the front lines, Roy said he ``felt terribly bad."

``I was worried for my children not to see the news this morning in Canada," he said.

# Ramp ceremony held in Kandahar for two Cdn. soldiers killed Wed.

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 462

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KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) \_ About one-thousand soldiers from several nations have paid tribute to the latest Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

A brief but emotional ramp ceremony was held just at dawn Friday at Kandahar airfield for Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Field Ambulance unit and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the Royal 22nd Regiment, both based in Valcartier, Que.

Their caskets were loaded onto a Hercules transport aircraft for the long flight back to Canada.

During the ceremony which began at 5:30 a.m. local time and lasted about 30 minutes, both were remembered for their commitment to making the world a better place.

The deaths of the two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV cameraman destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the fresh troops won an all-day battle with the Taliban for a dusty Afghan hill.

Canadian battlegroup commander Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier said the mission called Operation Eagle Eye was still a success, despite the deaths.

“We obtained our objectives, we secured a corridor to link up with Afghan authorities and push reconstruction projects,” Gauthier said Thursday.

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was in the back of the armoured vehicle, preparing a report on the 13-hour battle, when the bomb exploded and seriously wounded his cameraman, Charles Dubois.

“I was preparing the stand-up for my report to say the operation was a success,” Roy told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

“At the moment I was writing, there was an immense explosion and I was thrown to the rear. I woke up eight seconds later. Charles was next to me, the others were thrown from the vehicle.”

At least five Canadian vehicles, including a minesweeper, had passed over the track before the explosion.

“There is no training to prepare us to get through that,” said Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand.

“But the two soldiers died doing the work they love.”

The casualties were all taken by U.S. helicopter to the main base at Kandahar Airfield.

The hill sits in the Zhari district, about 50 kilometres west of Kandahar. Zhari and Panjwaii district, just to the south, are Taliban hotbeds that have seen many battles between Canadian troops and insurgents in the past 18 months.

Several times strategic spots have fallen into Taliban hands, only to be retaken by Canadian troops.

The situation has improved greatly compared to a year ago, Gauthier said.

“Last year in the district of Zhari and Panjwaii, it was total war,” Gauthier said.

“There were no more civilians in there, all you saw was what you saw in World War II, where artillery would fire, the tanks would roll and clear the region.”

The area is also a popular route for armed bands of drug traffickers who have their own interest in undermining law and order.

Troops are trying to expand a “security bubble” to allow supply convoys to pass with greater security through the area.

“There is a group of terrorists involved in drug trafficking who aren't only attacking (NATO) forces, but also Afghan security forces and civilians,” Gauthier said.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have become the biggest threat facing Canadian troops in recent months, as insurgents adapt their tactics.

Gauthier said Canadian troops are getting better at detecting the mines and homemade bombs that are triggered by remote control or pressure plates.

He said 80 or 90 per cent of IEDs are discovered before they blow.

“A very small slice of the remaining per cent has deadly impact on us,” Gauthier said.

Mercier and Duchesne are the 68th and 69th Canadian soldiers to die in Afghanistan since 2002.

# CP News Budget, Thursday, Aug. 23

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** ADVISORIES  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 1312

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All times ET.

For queries about non-CP syndicated copy, call the Specials Desk at 416-507-2152.

## SOLDIERS KILLED

MONTREAL \_ A Quebec military base is grieving after the death of two of its soldiers in Afghanistan. Capt. Mathieu Dufour of CFB Valcartier, near Quebec City, said Thursday the deaths are a "tremendous shock" because the base is like a tightly knit family. News of the deaths was being hashed out in newspaper columns and on Quebec's popular French-language talk radio stations. 650 words. By Jonathan Montpetit. See CP Photos. BC-Afghan-Cda-Que, 3rd Writethru. Moved.

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan \_ The Canadian battlegroup commander in Afghanistan says a mission to take a dusty Afghan hill was a success, despite the deaths of two Canadian soldiers and their Afghan interpreter. Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier of the Royal 22nd Regiment said the operation took high ground from the Taliban that will allow Canada and its allies to create a supply corridor in the area west of Kandahar. 850 words. By Martin Ouellet. See CP Photos KANDX101-102. BC-Afghan-Cda-Deaths, 7th Writethru. Moved.

TORONTO \_ A stretch of Canada's busiest highway is set to be renamed in honour of soldiers who have given their lives in Afghanistan, Ontario government officials said Thursday. The renaming would affect a 170-kilometre stretch of the highway from CFB Trenton \_ where the bodies of repatriated soldiers arrive \_ to Toronto, where the remains are examined at a forensics centre. 600 words. By Melissa Juergensen. BC-Afghan-Highway-Tribute, 2nd Writethru. Moved.

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan \_ A Radio-Canada reporter who survived a roadside bomb attack that killed two Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter said Thursday the horrific nature of the blast is hard to describe. Patrice Roy, 44, told reporters at the Canadian base in Kandahar that he was writing his report inside the moving armoured vehicle just seconds before the explosion that also injured his colleague. 500 words. By Martin Ouelett. BC-Afghan-Cda-Journalists, 4th Writethru. Moved General (G) and World (W).

UNDATED \_ The injuries suffered by two Canadian journalists in Afghanistan is not only a sobering reminder of the dangers they face while in the field, but also a reminder of why they are in a war zone, striving to bring Canadians one of the most important stories of their time, say those in the media. 1,000 words. By Allison Jones. BC-CRAFT-Embedded-Journalists. Moved.

## OTHER CANADIAN

OTTAWA \_ The Conservative Party of Canada is in yet another dispute with Elections Canada, this time over advertising spending. The Chief Electoral Officer has rejected a number of expense claims submitted on behalf of candidates during the last election, and their financial agents are taking him to court. The Liberals are calling on their rivals to open their financial books up to closer scrutiny. 700 words. By Jennifer Ditchburn. BC-Conservatives-Expenses-Dispute. Moved.



WINNIPEG \_ Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day is rejecting calls for an inquiry into allegations that police used masked agents to disrupt this week's international summit in Montebello, Que. Day says none of the suspected men is connected to the RCMP. 800 words. By Steve Lambert. BC–Summit–Police–Day, 2nd Writethru. Moved.

HALIFAX \_ Bill Philpitt was perplexed when he crouched down to place flowers on his wife's grave marker and found her bronze vase was gone. The former trucker, who noticed several other small containers were missing from other graves, soon discovered that he had fallen victim to a disturbing phenomenon affecting everything from cemeteries to power stations. Thieves are pilfering copper wherever they can get it as the price of the metal rises. 650 words. By Alison Auld. Member photo requested. BC–NS–Grave–Robbers, 1st Writethru. Moved.

VICTORIA \_ The embattled B.C. Lottery Corp. announced further steps Thursday to ensure the ticket buying public is not being ripped off by lottery retailers. The new measures follow the corporation's release of a second investigation that found ``significant shortcomings" in prize payout procedures and just hours before the corporation board of directors announced fired CEO and president Vic Poleschuk would be paid more than \$600,000 in severance and bonuses. 950 words. By Scott Sutherland. BC–B.C.–Lotteries, 3rd Writethru. Moved.

DARTMOUTH, N.S. \_ It was a few tense hours, but it meant a lifetime. Cora Greenaway still remembers the fading blues of the Amsterdam sky that evening, the crispness of the white blanket that secured her secret bundle, and the black pit of fear in her stomach as she spirited the baby away. On Thursday, Greenaway was reunited with the woman who was that baby 65 years ago and whom she rescued from the Gestapo. 1,000 words. By Amy Pugsley Fraser, Halifax Chronicle Herald. BC–NS–Holocaust–Reunion. Moved.

SASKATOON \_ Fearing a housing boom will leave returning university students couch surfing or sleeping in their cars, the City of Saskatoon has put out the call for anyone with available space to open their doors. 500 words. By Tim Cook in Regina. BC–Sask–Students–No–Room, 1st Writethru. Moved.

TORONTO \_ Ontario's health–care workers will have another line of defence against potentially life–threatening diseases following Tuesday's announcement the province would arm its nurses with new respirators and safety needles to protect against job–related injuries and infections. Health Minister George Smitherman and Labour Minister Steve Peters made the announcement at Toronto's North York General Hospital, where nurses repeatedly warned they were seeing SARS cases in the period between the two waves of infections four years ago. 500 words. By Steve Rennie. BC–Ont–Safe–Needles, 2nd Writethru. Moved regional (C).

TORONTO \_ Some of them run for miles the morning of a competition. Others sleep until 4 p.m. so they can train all night. But Andrew Ryder's regimen is decidedly more low–key: playing just four hours a day for a week. Ryder is a professional video–game player taking part in this weekend's Toronto stop on the World Series of Video Gaming circuit \_ the tour's first–ever Canadian stop. 500 words. By Christopher Maughan. BC–World–Series–Gaming. Moved General (G) and Entertainment (E).

HALIFAX \_ Nova Scotia's finance minister will continue to pay residential tax rates on three rental cottages he co–owns despite complaints from business rivals who argue the politician should be charged higher commercial or seasonal rates. Michael Baker and his three business partners in Island View Cottages don't have to pay commercial rates because they rent the cottages monthly, rather than daily or weekly, the Tourism Department ruled. 573 words. By Keith Doucette. BC–NS–Minister–Rental–Taxes, 4th Writethru. Moved regional (A).

FOR THE WEEKEND

VANCOUVER \_ Platoons of lawyers who once cost the U.S. and Canadian governments hundreds of millions of dollars before the softwood agreement was signed are once again being trundled out for a U.S.-launched arbitration under the deal. The process is being closely watched both because it's the first real test of the agreement and the first time the London Court of International Arbitration, which handles mainly private commercial disputes, is being used as part of a state-to-state treaty to settle a disagreement. The softwood lumber agreement signed last fall was supposed end decades of bitter, costly trade skirmishes and take the issue off the Canadian and U.S. foreign policy agendas. But the Americans have been complaining for months Canada is violating the deal by not charging the requisite border tax on B.C. and Alberta lumber exports and allowing illegal support programs to prop up producers in Ontario and Quebec. 1,200 words. By Steve Mertil. See CP Photo CPT111. EDs: Stands for weekend editions. BC-Softwood-Arbitration.

# NATO issuing new guidelines after attack by rebels disguised as Afghan troops

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 222

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BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) \_ NATO will issue new guidelines to its troops in Afghanistan to avoid a repeat of a deadly attack this week by Taliban rebels disguised in Afghan army uniforms, a senior commander said Thursday.

Insurgents wearing Afghan army uniforms attacked a remote NATO base Wednesday in mountainous Nuristan province, killing two Afghan soldiers and wounding 11 NATO troops.

“After the attack of yesterday, we'll send more detailed guidance in order to control this in accordance with the government of Afghanistan,” said Maj.-Gen. Giorgio Battisti, deputy commander in charge of logistics for the NATO force there.

Specifics on the new guidance were not available.

Speaking from Kabul by video link to reporters at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Battisti said Afghan army uniforms were easily available for sale outside the country.

“It is a matter for the government of Afghanistan to check this but, as I said, it's probably coming from outside Afghanistan,” he said.

Violence in Afghanistan is currently running at its highest level since U.S.-led forces invaded in 2001 \_ particularly in the south and east \_ but Battisti said the NATO force of 40,000 was making progress in stabilizing the country.

“More than 60 per cent of Afghanistan is calm and stable,” he said.

Battisti said the insurgents had presented little threat to communications lines bringing in fuel and other supplies to NATO troops from Pakistan. He said snowfall, flooding and the poor condition of Afghanistan's roads were a greater problem.

# INDEX:International, Defence, Politics

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23

**KEYWORDS:** INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

**PUBLICATION:** bnw

**WORD COUNT:** 141

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KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – The Canadian battlegroup commander in Afghanistan says a mission to take a dusty Afghan hill was a success, despite the deaths of two Canadian soldiers and their Afghan interpreter.

Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier of the Royal 22nd Regiment says the operation took high ground from the Taliban that will allow Canada and its allies to create a supply corridor in the area west of Kandahar.

The mission, named Eagle Eye, met resistance from Taliban fighters during several hours of fighting, but no Canadians were injured in the battle.

But a short time after the fighting was finished, an armoured vehicle struck a bomb, killing Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment, Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance and an Afghan interpreter.

A Radio-Canada camera man and a soldier were also hurt.

Several other Canadian vehicles had passed the same spot before the explosion was triggered.

(BN)

# INDEX:Defence, International

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL  
**PUBLICATION:** bnw  
**WORD COUNT:** 141

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KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — About one-thousand soldiers from several nations have paid tribute to the latest Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

An emotional ramp ceremony was held just at dawn Friday at Kandahar airfield for Master Corporal Christian Duchesne and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment, both based in Valcartier, Quebec.

Their caskets were loaded onto a Hercules transport aircraft for the long flight back to Canada.

During the 30-minute ceremony, the soldiers were remembered for their commitment to making the world a better place.

The soldiers were killed in by a roadside bomb attack Wednesday in the Zhari district about 50 kilometres west of Kandahar city.

They were returning from the first major combat operation for the Quebec-based Van Doos regiment in Afghanistan, codenamed Operation Eagle Eye.

Another Canadian soldier was wounded, along with Radio-Canada cameraman Charles Dubois, who had one of his legs amputated below the knee.

They are the 68th and 69th Canadian soldiers to die in Afghanistan since 2002.

(CP)

clt

# Afghan–Highway–Tribute

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE POLITICS TRANSPORT  
**PUBLICATION:** bnw  
**WORD COUNT:** 127

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PICTON — A stretch of Ontario highway that has been the well-travelled route of funeral processions for most of the Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan may be renamed in their honour.

Ontario's premier is considering naming 172-kilometres of the 4–0–1 ``Highway of Heroes."

The bodies of the soldiers are flown into the Canadian Forces' base at Trenton, in eastern Ontario, for an official repatriation ceremony, then placed in a motorcade for the trip to Toronto for autopsy.

People waving flags or standing solemnly at attention have been lining bridges along the route to show their respect as the motorcades pass underneath.

The scene was repeated yesterday as the body of Private Simon Longtin began the first leg of his trip home to Quebec.

An online petition with thousands of signatures asked the province's Transportation Ministry to make the name change.

(BN)

gjc

# Afghan-Cda-Que-Update (news conference)

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23

**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

**PUBLICATION:** bnw

**WORD COUNT:** 115

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C-F-B VALCARTIER, Que. -- Military officials at Quebec's C-F-B Valcartier say soldiers at the base and their families understand and support Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

Lieutenant-Colonel Hercule Gosselin told a news conference today that everyone at the base near Quebec City is grieving following the deaths of two of its soldiers in a roadside bomb attack.

Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment and Master Corporal Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance were killed yesterday, along with an Afghan interpreter.

The two soldiers were described as well-trained, experienced and dedicated to the mission.

Mercier is being described as a ``pillar" of his military company and Duchesne as ``loyal."

The two died the same day the body of Private Simon Longtin, also based at Valcartier, was brought back to Canada.

(CP)

# Presumed–Terrorist

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**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**KEYWORDS:** JUSTICE INTERNATIONAL  
**PUBLICATION:** bnw  
**WORD COUNT:** 118

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MONTREAL — Alleged terrorist Adil Charkaoui is hoping new information will help lift restrictions imposed on him under a federal security certificate.

Charkaoui's lawyers were back in court yesterday to present several legal motions before a Federal Court judge.

The Moroccan–born Charkaoui was arrested in 2003 and detained for 21 months under the provisions of the security certificate until he was released in 2005.

He has had to follow a number of strict conditions.

His lawyers say the conditions should be lifted in light of a Supreme Court of Canada ruling.

There's also new information from Moroccan authorities and a newspaper article.

In the article convicted terrorist Ahmed Ressam is quoted as saying he lied about seeing Charkaoui at an al–Qaida training camp in Afghanistan.

Charkaoui also says his lawyers have new evidence from Morocco that makes it clear he's not a member of a terrorist group.

(CP)

RPW



**'At the moment I started to write, there was a tremendous blast ... I woke up maybe eight seconds later, Charles was beside me, the others had already been blown out of the vehicle ... '**

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**IDNUMBER:** 200708240127  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A01

**ILLUSTRATION:** Journalist Patrice Roy  
HO CANADA-SOLDIERS  
##HO#REUTERS#X80001#An undated handout photo of Canadian Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, a member of the 5th Field Ambulance, based at CFB Valcartier who was killed in Afghanistan on August 22, 2007. Two Canadian soldiers and an interpreter were killed and two journalists injured during the attack approximately 50km west of Kandahar. REUTERS Handout Department of National Defence (CANADA). EDITORIAL USE ONLY. NOT FOR SALE FOR MARKETING OR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS. Duchesne, a master corporal and married father of three girls, was a 14-year veteran with three foreign missions under his belt. Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, a master warrant officer who grew up near Sherbrooke, was also a husband and father of three. More on the soldiers, A15.  
JACQUES BOISSINOT  
Afghan Cda Deaths 20070823 TOPIX##JACQUES BOISSINOT#The Canadian Press#CP#The Canadian flag flies at half-mast as flowers are attached to the main entrance fence Thursday, Aug. 23 2007 at CFB Valcartier, Que. Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment and Master Corporal Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance, based at Valcartier, were killed Wednesday, along with an Afghan interpreter. (CP PHOTO Jacques Boissinot) CANADA JACQUES BOISSINOT  
cp The Canadian flag flies at half-mast near flower-adorned gates to CFB Valcartier in Quebec yesterday. The base, home to the famed Royal 22nd Regiment, or Van Doos, is reeling from the deaths of three soldiers. ;  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 1048

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Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was sitting beside Canadian Forces medic Christian Duchesne when the armoured vehicle they were riding in hit a road mine near Kandahar, Afghanistan. Duchesne and a second soldier, Mario Mercier, were killed, as well as an Afghan interpreter. Roy suffered only shock but his cameraman, Charles Dubois, was seriously wounded and had his leg amputated below the knee.

Roy yesterday relived the horrifying experience in an interview, translated here from French, with a CBC radio reporter:

Roy: We left very early in the morning with a company whose mission was to take a mountain, or re-take a mountain. It was 16 kilometres between there and our departure point.

We were told it would be pretty light going, that they didn't think the Taliban would be listening.

'At the moment I started to write, there was a tremendous blast ... I woke up maybe eight seconds later, Charles was beside me, the others had already been blown out of the vehicle ... '

But we quickly noticed that the operation would be a lot more complicated.

The Taliban started firing rockets all over the place, not directly at our vehicle because we were following behind, but at the ones ahead. So for 13 hours we drove around a village in the LAV3; we were near the mountain but couldn't go up.

And Charles Dubois, our cameraman who was injured, took some extraordinary pictures of that operation because, from our vantage point, we could see everything in relative security.

Toward the end of the day, after 13 hours, they decided to go up to the post they were supposed to reach – the target – and it's while we were climbing up the last bend on the mountain that there was a flash, a massive shock, in the LAV3.

When I came to, my cameraman Charles was beside me in a great deal of pain, and the others had been ejected.

The vehicle, the back of the vehicle, was completely smashed. Obviously there was a first aid operation set up, etcetera. It was quite difficult. Then we were evacuated ... to the base at Kandahar, where Charles was treated. And now we're leaving in a few hours for Germany, to the hospital there, and then to Canada.

Brooks Decillia (CBC reporter): Before you went up that hill, how would you characterize the battle? Tell me about that.

Roy: I'm not a soldier but I think that, even by military standards, it was a major battle.

They weren't expecting it to be that major, in the area where we were there was no expectation we would come under so much fire. The Taliban were attacking with small arms, with rockets.

Anything that lasts 13 hours is quite long ... We stayed in a four-square-kilometre area for four or five hours to take positions where the mines could be cleared, because mines are the biggest danger.

And the soldiers had de-mining equipment working ahead of us to remove the mines, but clearly the machine missed one.

But it was a major engagement, it was the first significant operation for the (Royal) 22nd (Regiment), there had been patrols beforehand, in the last month, but this was an operation, what they called a show of force in a region that had been completely overtaken by the Taliban.

The Canadians were there a year ago, they left, and they said we should go back ... It's difficult to imagine how all that area could have been secured even in a year because all the Canadian tanks that go there are attacked whether there's eight, one or two.

Decillia: Describe the moments leading up to the explosion and then what happened.

Roy: We were arriving. Charles and I were extraordinarily tired, we hadn't slept the night before because we had travelled by night and I was writing a little stand-up (report) because we had built the story as a visual summary of the previous 48 hours.

So in those hours I was taking notes about what was happening, and at that point I was writing the conclusion and I was reading it out loud, changing a word here and there.

At the moment when I leaned my head down and scratched out a word, there was a flash, a tremendous noise,

'At the moment I started to write, there was a tremendous blast ... I woke up maybe eight seconds later, Charles

it was a flash, and then we found ourselves – I'm not even sure I lost consciousness, but anyway, what's certain is that, once again, the force of the explosion was massive.

We think maybe they put two or three mines there because LAV3s are vehicles that we were told are very robust.

It was a shock. It's rare to find people who have encountered that, and people said, military people who know, like, first aid people, ambulance attendants, told me you'll see, you'll have more control than you expect.

For about 15 minutes you become almost insensible.

I wanted to look after Charles, the soldiers. They started first aid, and all that mattered was to get out of there fast.

I was quite anxious because I was thinking 'We're civilians, and the first people they'll evacuate are the soldiers, not us, not Charles.'

Except that the soldiers' misfortune was lucky for us in a way, because they died on the spot and there were two injured people left, a soldier and Charles.

So we were evacuated by the first American helicopter.

Decillia: What did you see after the explosion?

Roy: I saw the LAV completely cut open. I saw people below, I saw panic, obviously, people were screaming. I heard screams everywhere. ... I saw Charles who had blood and, fortunately, it was only his leg.

Although we can say that we were caught up in this extraordinary mishap, and even though we're conscious of the risks we run in theatre, we were relatively lucky; in my case, obviously very lucky.

Decillia: What's going through your mind?

Roy: Nothing ... I was focused on trying to get help.

I was concerned they might not help us as much because we're civilians, but in the end they helped us. ... Afterward, in the helicopter, when we got back, I thought 'We could have stepped on another mine, we could have... . But that was after.

It was almost like we were in an altered state, I imagine it was the adrenaline, I don't know.

But I have to tell you, when I saw the American helicopter arrive, it's 'Phew, let's get out of here.'

Decillia: Your family, what did you tell them. ...

Roy: Well, first I reassured my wife. I was afraid of rumours, you know how it is.

Rumours start flying right and left. Some thought I was dead. ... when you go to Afghanistan, even when nothing's happening, you know, you're reporting here, people are worried about you, they wonder a bit 'Why did he go?'

So, if in addition to that a mine explodes, it's the proof that they were right (to be worried) and the proof that it's true that it's dangerous to cover a war, and Charles and I knew it.

'At the moment I started to write, there was a tremendous blast ... I woke up maybe eight seconds later, Charles

It was the fourth time Charles had been here. He's an unbelievable cameraman who is strong, who knows where to go, who doesn't take risks.

He was very unlucky but ... it's a mix of 'Wouldn't we be better off to stay in the camp and wait for news from the front and report it as best we can?' This is not a traditional war – mines, there's nothing more treacherous in the world than a landmine.

We knew the Taliban were shooting at us, and (the military) set it up in such a way we weren't exposed in our vehicle, but nobody can do anything about a mine.

In a separate interview yesterday, Roy gave more details about the incident:

It was about 6: 12 p.m. At the moment I started to write there was a tremendous blast, and I woke up maybe eight seconds later.

Charles was beside me, the others had already been blown out of the vehicle. And then it was first aid, helicopters. ...Mario Mercier, 43

# Stretch of 401 to be renamed to honour dead

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<b>IDNUMBER</b>	200708240124
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	The Toronto Star
<b>DATE:</b>	2007.08.24
<b>EDITION:</b>	Ont
<b>SECTION:</b>	News
<b>PAGE:</b>	A16
<b>ILLUSTRATION:</b>	FRED THORNHILL reuters file photo An Ontario Provincial Police officer salutes hearses carrying the remains of six Canadian soldiers down Highway 401 near Cobourg, in July, as dozens of people pay tribute from atop an overpass in what has become a ritual. ;
<b>SOURCE:</b>	Canadian Press
<b>COPYRIGHT:</b>	© 2007 Torstar Corporation
<b>WORD COUNT:</b>	129

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A stretch of Highway 401 from Toronto east to Trenton is set to be renamed Highway of Heroes, in honour of Canadian soldiers who have died in Afghanistan.

The 170-kilometre stretch of the 401 runs between the airbase in Trenton, where the coffins of fallen soldiers arrive home from Afghanistan, and the forensics centre in Toronto that receives the bodies.

Overpasses along the route have been the scenes of large, impromptu gatherings of people waving flags, holding placards and saluting the passing convoys of hearses and limousines carrying the bodies.

Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield said there were "no barriers to making this happen."

"I think when you consider the sacrifice that the soldiers and others have made, it's just a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on that sacrifice and to be able to acknowledge it," she said.

# Deaths stir up calls for pullout; Bloc threatening to trigger confidence vote if Tories don't confirm 2009 troop exit in throne speech

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240121  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Met  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A15  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe says there's no shame intelling allies to replace Canadian troops in Afghanistan in 2009. ;  
**BYLINE:** Tonda MacCharles  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 586

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Opposition politicians said yesterday they do not want to play politics around the deaths of three Quebec soldiers in four days.

Still, the Liberals and Bloc Quebecois are once again pressing for an end to Canada's combat role in Afghanistan by February 2009, while the NDP says that's two years too late.

The Bloc is alone so far in saying it is prepared to try to bring a crucial confidence vote on the mission this fall.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, leader of the Official Opposition, repeated his call that Prime Minister Stephen Harper notify NATO allies now that Canadian troops will withdraw.

But Dion refused to directly answer questions about whether he would join Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe's demand yesterday that a 2009 military pullout be clearly outlined in a possible Conservative government throne speech this fall.

Duceppe said the Bloc will introduce an amendment to that effect if Harper does not meet his demand.

"It's not lacking honour to state that well, we've been there two years, there has been an effort deployed, and that another country should replace us," Duceppe told reporters yesterday.

Such a move would trigger a debate in the Commons and possibly a confidence vote on a military mission that has divided Parliament and Canadians, and gained new prominence with Quebec-based soldiers now deployed and dying there.

It's widely believed Harper wants to formally end the current parliamentary session, due to resume Sept. 17, and come back later in the fall with a new agenda for his minority government.

His government is stalled in the polls but aims to last at least until October 2009 – the date now fixed in law for the next federal election, barring any non-confidence votes in the House.

Dion agreed yesterday a throne speech "by definition is a confidence vote."

"If no party of the Opposition supports it, you know what is the consequence," he said.

But he wouldn't make "threats" to bring down the government, calling such talk hypothetical before a throne speech is made.

Instead of waiting till then, Dion said, the Conservative government should announce its Afghanistan intentions now, knowing it does not have the support in the House for an extension of the combat mission.

There is strong support, though, for ongoing humanitarian and development work.

"I don't play politics on the backs of the tragedies and the victims that are growing," Dion told reporters. "That's not the point. The fundamental point is that Canada needs to be clear about its commitments, and that, after three years of difficult and dangerous combat missions, Canada will have done its part.

Duceppe, in St-Hyacinthe where a by-election is pending, told reporters it is a "normal reaction" for Quebecers to demand an immediate withdrawal of troops following soldiers' deaths.

But, he added, "We can't leave overnight. People understand that. That's to act responsibly."

Duceppe said those, including NDP leader Jack Layton, calling for an immediate pullout "are exploiting the emotions of Quebecers these days," and "irresponsible."

In Montreal yesterday, Layton told reporters he does not want to wait for a throne speech for a clear change of course in Afghanistan.

Layton later told the Toronto Star in an interview that the Bloc's proposal would essentially ratify Harper's agenda to 2009.

"It's crystal clear the NDP is the only party taking the position on a pullout before 2009, and I can tell you support for that position is growing across the country."

But the Bloc and the Liberals say Canada must honour its commitment, and notify allies now that other NATO members will have to replace Canadian troops in the southern province of Afghanistan in February 2009.

Meanwhile, the federal government stayed mum yesterday as news of the deaths of two more members of the famed Royal 22nd Regiment, the Van Doos, reverberated across the country.

Maxime Bernier, the new foreign affairs minister expected to be the government's voice to Quebecers on the war, and Peter MacKay, the new defence minister, refused requests for interviews.

The risk for the government of ignoring the Opposition's growing chorus of objections is clear.

Pierre Martin, professor of political science at the Universite de Montreal, told a television interviewer the mission's goals and objectives are not widely understood by the population.

"If the goals aren't clear, the costs are high, and there's no prospect of success, then politically the mission won't fly," Martin said.

# Dion challenges PM on clean air; Urges Conservatives to revive climate change legislation before ending parliamentary session

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240120  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Met  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A19  
**ILLUSTRATION:** TOM HANSON CP Stephane Dion arrives for a news conference in Ottawa yesterday. The Liberal leader has urged Conservatives to honour Kyoto commitments. ;  
**BYLINE:** Tonda Maccharles  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 348

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Opposition leader Stephane Dion is challenging the Conservative government to ditch its "so-called clean air plan" and accept the re-drafted Clean Air and Climate Change Act that Opposition parties agreed to in the spring.

Earlier this week, the Conservative government released a climate change plan in response to the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, which required the government to show its plan and a timeline for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to meet the Kyoto Protocol. That agreement calls for emissions to be 6 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012.

The Conservative plan does not meet that short-term target, but aims to hit that level in about 2020.

Dion outlined in a public letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper why the Conservative plan will fail, and will likely not even hit the targets for 2050.

Dion said the Opposition's efforts on the re-worked bill is a better plan to honour Canada's international environmental commitments under Kyoto, and would be better for the Canadian environment and economy overall.

Dion demanded the government move to pass into law the Opposition plan that was drafted in committee in the spring, or bring it back later for implementation if, as expected, the Conservatives prematurely end this parliament and come back in the fall with a new throne speech.

Dion said a new throne speech is a risky gambit for the government.

"If they prorogue and they go toward a throne speech everybody knows that the risk of an election is going up because (whether) we will support this throne speech is unknown."

But, he said, "we will never go there if the Prime Minister accepts the view that his plan is full of weaknesses."

Still, Dion insisted: "If they kill the bill, then we have a problem."

Dion challenges PM on clean air; Urges Conservatives to revive climate change legislation before ending pa



A spokesperson for Environment Minister John Baird criticized Dion yesterday for doing politics on a day when "our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the fallen and the troops in Afghanistan."

Mike Van Soelen, Baird's communications director, said that while climate change is an important issue, "today is not the time nor place" for those discussions.

"Certainly we believe we have met the terms of the law and we have fully respected the will of Parliament." Van Soelen said the "legislation asked us to bring forward a plan. We've done that. We had already done that in the spring."

The Prime Minister's Office did not respond directly to Dion's challenge.

# Battle-hardened vets mourned; Awful news greeted with 'dignity, courage' by families as colleagues weep at the loss of 'an incredible human being' and 'great leader'

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240117

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Met

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A15

**ILLUSTRATION:** MARTIN OUELLET cp Soldiers carry the coffin of Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne during a ramp ceremony yesterday at Kandahar Airfield. Left, Radio-Canada camera operator Charles Dubois, 29, lost part of a leg in a blast on Wednesday. ;

**BYLINE:** Sean Gordon

**SOURCE:** Toronto Star

**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation

**WORD COUNT:** 559

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One was an only child from tiny Weedon, Que., the other came from Montreal, but their careers drew them to the same military base, a shared mission to the hill outside Kandahar where together they met their end.

The fates of Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, an infantry soldier with the 2nd battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment, and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, a medic with the 5th Field Ambulance company, were sealed when a land mine ripped through their armoured vehicle at dusk on Wednesday.

Yesterday both were mourned by the reeling soldiers and families of CFB Valcartier. Each had a wife and three children.

"The families took the news of their deaths with courage and dignity," Lt.-Col. Hercule Gosselin, the interim base commander, told a news conference at the base.

A third Valcartier soldier, hurt in the blast that also killed an Afghan translator and injured a Radio-Canada camera operator, was airlifted to a military hospital in Germany, military officials said.

Radio-Canada's Charles Dubois, 29, was taken to the same hospital after a partial amputation of one of his legs. He was accompanied by correspondent Patrice Roy, the network's high-profile parliamentary bureau chief, who suffered minor scrapes in the blast.

"My mission was to enter (Afghanistan) with Charles and to leave with Charles. He needs medical care, and I will leave with him. Beyond the journalistic mission, I had a moral commitment (toward Dubois)," Roy told a Canadian Press reporter in Kandahar moments before leaving the country.

Mercier, 43, grew up in Weedon, near Sherbrooke, in Quebec's Eastern Townships, and was remembered as a gifted soldier, leader, and fitness freak whose physical stamina could put younger soldiers to shame.

"He was the real deal, no question ... he was an incredible human being," said Gosselin, whose friendship with Mercier stretched 19 years.

Gosselin said Mercier's family – who could not be reached for comment yesterday – includes children aged 9, 15, and 17.

During his 23-year military career, Mercier had gone on four previous overseas deployments, including Haiti and the former Yugoslavia.

The 34-year-old Duchesne – a father of three girls aged 9, 5 and 3 – was a 14-year veteran who first served in the infantry corps before becoming a medical specialist.

"He was a great leader, and completely devoted," said a tearful Cmdr. Patrice Carriere, who broke the news of Duchesne's death to his family

Duchesne was also a battle-hardened veteran of three foreign missions. A colleague called him "an example to follow."

"I'm so very saddened ... he was loyal, unassuming. Five minutes with him, and it was like you had known him 10 years," said Master Seaman Yannick Fortier, who was Duchesne's supervisor.

The most recent deaths have captivated public attention in Quebec and monopolized the airwaves in a province where polls suggest opposition to the Afghan mission is increasing.

But there have been few spontaneous outpourings of protest, nor do the province's major pacifist groups appear to be in any hurry to stoke the discontent.

Echec à la guerre, an anti-war collective, is planning a large-scale protest for Oct. 28 – coinciding with demonstrations around the world – but there are no plans to hold events sooner.

"Of course we encourage our militants and sympathizers to express their opposition, but no, there are no protests being organized that I know of," said Raymond Legault, a spokesperson for the collective.

He pointed out that, while the anti-war sentiment in Quebec is strong, it doesn't always translate into massive protests.

"We'll continue to evaluate, if we believe we can make our point more forcefully through a protest action, we'll do it," said Legault, whose nephew is an officer-cadet in the Canadian Forces.

At dawn today in Kandahar, about 1,000 soldiers from several nations paid tribute to the two Canadians at a brief ramp ceremony.

Their caskets were loaded onto a Hercules transport aircraft for the long flight back to Canada.

Battle-hardened vets mourned; Awful news greeted with 'dignity, courage' by families as colleagues weep

# The Van Doos' sacrifice

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240031  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** Editorial  
**PAGE:** AA06  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 349

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Quebecers have been shaken by Canada's latest casualties in Afghanistan. While the public was braced for losses, few expected the Royal 22nd Regiment, the famed Van Doos, would suffer so many so soon, driving Canada's military and diplomatic toll to 70.

After the death Sunday of Pte. Simon Longtin, one opinion poll reported that seven in 10 Quebecers favoured pulling out our troops before their mission in Kandahar ends in February 2009. Even more may feel so inclined now that Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne have been killed. Mercier, Duchesne and an Afghan interpreter were killed Wednesday by a roadside bomb that also injured another soldier and two journalists.

While it is understandable in the wake of the deaths that many Quebecers want Canada to leave Kandahar now, Parliament has given Canada's word that we would shoulder a combat role in Kandahar until 2009 to prevent the Taliban from staging a comeback.

That does not mean Canada aims to "win" a counter-insurgency war in Afghanistan. Afghans themselves must decide their future, and few would welcome foreign troops indefinitely. But the Canadian Forces can and should help the country's democratically-elected government build up its army, promote political reconciliation, create safer conditions for development aid that will help millions build better lives and deny terror the safe haven it had in Afghanistan before 9/11.

In 2009, Canada can honourably hand off the Kandahar mission to the Afghans or to one of our allies, knowing that we have done more than our share. But for now, our resolve must not waver. That would betray every Canadian who has fallen in this cause or been wounded, and the many thousands who have served in the field.

The Van Doos' regimental prayer asks that "our swords uphold only a just cause." In Afghanistan, under a lawful United Nations mandate to sustain democracy, thwart terror and deliver aid, the cause is undeniably just. As Liberal Leader Stephane Dion put it, the Van Doos bring "hope and stability" to a troubled region.

# War reporters seek truth and thrills

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240009  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A02  
**BYLINE:** Rosie DiManno  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 591

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An admission: Journalists get a kick out of war.

The blood races, the adrenalin courses, and everything feels more vivid, all the colours brighter, sounds pulsating in your ears, the percussion of bombs rattling in your bones, in your lungs.

No other story comes close to the thrill, and risk, of a combat zone. It can even become addictive. I've known some of those war-struck bang-bang chasers. Their bar stories are only slightly more exaggerated than their dispatches.

For some, perhaps, combat reporting is perceived as a shortcut to professional glory.

But for most, the telling of the tale is the thing, even though all a reporter usually sees, even from the front lines, is a keyhole view of events: This outcrop of rock, that stretch of desert, and these particular soldiers, upon whom your life often depends. They're the ones with guns. We're armed only with notebooks and cameras and a scrutinizing eye.

The big picture is not always understood, the closer one gets to all the little ground-zero TICs – troops in contact – but it's precisely those hard-core incidents that need to be conveyed, in order for the broader narrative to be contextualized and personalized, to stress these are real people on both sides of a conflict. I think we give soldiers and civilians faces, back stories, voices, a connection and commonality.

It may be possible to report on events without actually witnessing them. Some make a career out of it, with their tall forehead expositions, while others, purportedly in the trenches, rely heavily on the fact-finding sorties of hired local help. But most war correspondents, in my experience, will move Heaven and Earth to get to the story themselves, whether embedded or operating as "unilaterals," a group viewed by the military as mavericks yet often venturing courageously to document events without interference.

The Canadian public complains that the Afghan mission hasn't been properly explained by the military, by politicians, nor even by correspondents reporting from the field.

I maintain this is a lazy and unsubstantiated whinge. Millions of words have been written and miles of film shot. To not know Afghanistan, or what Canadian combat troops have been doing there these past 18 months – successes and failures – just means you haven't been paying attention.

Two Radio Canada journalists were wounded in Kandahar on Wednesday because they were doing their jobs properly. It was bound to happen sooner or later, reporter casualties. Indeed, it happened to then-Toronto Star foreign correspondent Kathleen Kenna in the early aftermath of the Taliban's toppling, when she was severely injured by a grenade tossed into her vehicle.

Calamity can come from all sides, often when the keen sense of danger has passed. When I was in Baghdad – after "shock and awe" had mercifully concluded, a few days after American troops had entered the capital – two European journalists were killed by cannon fire while standing on their hotel room terrace, the tank crew mistaking a shouldered TV camera for a grenade launcher.

In Afghanistan the previous year, tagging along with the Northern Alliance as everyone awaited the U.S. aerial bombardment, a handful of reporters took up the offer to accompany a patrol retrieving Taliban fighters who'd purportedly surrendered nearby.

It was an ambush. Three journalists were killed. We'd just sat together at dinner and then they were dead.

Last year, 63 journalists were killed around the world, as well as 10 "media assistants," and 133 imprisoned. Some were targeted because they were reporters, murdered for illuminating the truth.

You just never know. And still it's worth it, for every pang of fear and every protracted episode of dread, even if nobody will remember the stories a week later.

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

# For Afghan sportswomen, goal is acceptance; Once barred from outdoor sport, female athletes are enthusiastically, though discreetly, embracing soccer

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240093

**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Sports

**PAGE:** C2

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Getty Images / Afghanistan women soccer players celebrate after defeating Pakistan's Baluchistan national team 1–0 in the semifinal match of Pakistan's national women's soccer championship in Islamabad on Wednesday. The Afghans are participating in the tournament as guests and advance to today's final. ;

**KEYWORDS:** 0

**DATELINE:** ISLAMABAD

**BYLINE:** Masroor Gilani

**SOURCE:** Agence France–Presse

**WORD COUNT:** 501

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ISLAMABAD – Six years ago in Taliban–ruled Afghanistan, soccer looked like a thing of the past. It was banned for men and unimaginable for women, who were barred from all outdoor sport.

But with the demise of ultra–conservative Islamic leadership — which also banned music, dancing and kite–flying — soccer has made such a spectacular comeback that there are 17 women's teams in the war–battered country.

This week in Islamabad, Afghanistan's women players, participating in the third Pakistan national women's championship, sprang a major surprise by reaching the final. In a major upset, Afghanistan beat Pakistan's Baluchistan team 1–0 to gate–crash into today's final.

Captain Shamila Kohistani scored the lone goal in the 11th minute to stun favourites Baluchistan, who reached the semi–finals after beating last year's runners–up, Islamabad.

"Long Live Afghanistan," jubilant players shouted, waving their national flag while supporters danced to a drum beat.

"I was very confident to win this match and to reach the final. My team has high morale to win the championship," said Kohistani.

The captain is proud and thrilled to be leading her squad on its first trip abroad. She sees it not only as promoting the sport to young Afghans, but fostering friendship between the two countries, which have had a somewhat strained relationship.

"I am very happy about this," Kohistani said. "We have never played outside Afghanistan. My players are very happy, and our visit to Pakistan will promote goodwill and friendly relations between the two nations," she said.

For Afghan sportswomen, goal is acceptance; Once barred from outdoor sport, female athletes are enthusiastically embracing soccer

Their coach, Abdul Saboor Walizada, said soccer is gaining popularity among young Afghan girls and many schools are starting to field teams.

"There is no national women's football team in Afghanistan, but (God willing) we are going to have one soon," he said.

The 18 members of the Afghan squad here, aged 15 to 18 years old, wear red and black T-shirts and trousers.

They hope that the kit is baggy enough not to offend anyone who thinks athletic wear is indecorous or sports in general to be in contravention of religious mores.

While many women and girls in Afghanistan still remain behind the veil, cloistered in their homes and denied access to education and sport, things are changing, Kohistani says.

"In Afghanistan we did not face any difficulty to play football," she said of the members of her squad. "My family fully supported me and encouraged me.

"I know women in Pakistan also face the same situation, and without the support of their families, they would not be able to play.

"But it is very important for the future of my country that women take active part in all walks of life, not only sports."

Taking part in Pakistan's tournament, she said, was all about gaining experience that will help establish the game among young Afghan women at home.

"Winning and losing is not so important; I always hope and wish to get experience in the game."

Her team was drawn from the best players after competitions between 17 school clubs in Kabul. Centre forward Sajia Saharfarid, 17, said the players came from all over the country despite differences in tolerance to sport.

In Kabul, there is little fear of retribution from the Taliban, and girls are free to enjoy whatever sport they liked. But for girls in the south, where the Taliban insurgency is concentrated, it is a different story, she said, with girls' freedoms strictly controlled.

Nevertheless, team manager Halima Sanger has high hopes for the development of soccer in Afghanistan.

"I see a very bright future," Sanger said, adding she envied the facilities available to Pakistani teams.

"If we have similar facilities in Afghanistan, we can become the best women's team in the world," she said.



# PM's 'jellybean' comment can't sugar-coat real issues

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240057  
**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Letters  
**PAGE:** A17  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Mandel Ngan, Agence France–Presse; Getty Images / SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP: Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is flanked by U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Felipe Calderon following a press conference at the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) summit in Montebello, Quebec. ;  
**KEYWORDS:** 0  
**BYLINE:** William Dascavich  
**SOURCE:** The Edmonton Journal  
**WORD COUNT:** 215

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Re: "Bush lauds Canada's Afghanistan role; But 'there are differences on the Northwest Passage,' U.S. president notes," The Journal, Aug. 22.

Does Prime Minister Stephen Harper really think that Canadians will believe him when he says that the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) meeting at Montebello, Que., was about mundane issues like standardizing the quality of jellybeans?

It's not jellybeans Canadians are worried about. It is the reality that important decisions affecting energy security, water exports, environment, foreign policy, food, health, labour, safety standards and other issues that could put Canada at a disadvantage and impinge on its sovereignty, are being made surreptitiously, without public and parliamentary debate.

If the issues discussed by the leaders are so innocent, why all the secrecy? Why all the security? Why couldn't they be dealt with through the democratic process?

Big business, represented by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE), attended the meeting.

In a paper released in April 2004, entitled "New Frontiers," the CCCE proposed a North American partnership based on five objectives.

The first was "reinventing borders." Also included: "forging new institutions to improve management of the relationship; enhancing energy and resource security; maximizing regulatory efficiencies, and strengthening the defence and security alliance."

These objectives can easily be interpreted to mean Canadian sovereignty will be seriously affected. One has to wonder whether Canada is being governed by Parliament or by the CCCE.

William Dascavich, Edmonton

# Poland holds Taliban commander

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240027  
**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A6  
**COLUMN:** Digest  
**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM; FOREIGN AID; POLAND; AFGHANISTAN  
**DATELINE:** WARSAW  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 82

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WARSAW – Polish troops are holding a Taliban commander known as "Puma" whose release the radical Islamist militia has demanded in exchange for 19 South Korean hostages, a report said Thursday.

Defence Minister Aleksander Szczyglo was cited by the PAP news agency as saying Polish troops serving with NATO–led forces had captured the commander on Aug. 16 in eastern Afghanistan.

He said Puma was the fourth most–wanted militant in Afghanistan. "It's therefore someone very important," Szczyglo was quoted as saying by the news agency.

# Ramp ceremony for fallen soldiers

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240026  
**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A6  
**COLUMN:** Digest  
**KEYWORDS:** CANADIANS; WAR  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 107

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KANDAHAR – The latest two Canadian soldiers to be killed in Afghanistan were given a sombre sendoff early Friday by hundreds of their comrades.

Soldiers carried the flag-draped coffins of Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, across the tarmac at the Kandahar airfield, as others looked on.

The ramp ceremony has become a familiar scene for Canadian forces during the mission in Afghanistan, in which 69 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed since 2002.

Duchesne, of the 5th Ambulance Company, and Mercier, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (known as the Van Doo), were killed Wednesday when their light armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb.

# Opposition grows in Quebec as soldiers' bodies come home; Military expected Taliban to retreat rather than confront Canadian tanks

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240024

**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A6

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Reuters / Scenes like this week's homecoming for Pte. Simon Longtin are helping to erode already weak support in Quebec for the Afghanistan mission. ; Photo: Journal Stock / (Master Cpl. Christian) Duchesne (and Master Warrant Officer Mario) Mercier ;

**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda and Nicole Baer

**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service

**WORD COUNT:** 691

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As Quebec prepares for the arrival of two more bodies of soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Canada faces growing emotional and political turmoil about the military mission to the wartorn country.

Disbelief, sorrow and pain were obvious at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, Que., on Thursday as soldiers tried to come to terms with the deaths of two more comrades.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Ambulance Company, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (known in English Canada as the Van Doos), were killed Wednesday when their light-armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb.

Another soldier and a Radio-Canada cameraman were also injured in the incident at Gundy Ghar in the Panjwaii district of southern Afghanistan.

On the same day, the flag-draped coffin of Pte. Simon Longtin, killed Sunday, returned to Canada.

On Thursday, Peter Walsh, a friend of Duchesne, drove from Petawawa, Ont., to pay his respects and lay flowers at the entrance gate of Valcartier, just outside Quebec City.

"I am sad and deeply touched," said Walsh, who returned from Afghanistan two weeks ago. Wiping tears from his cheeks, Walsh praised the soldiers' accomplishments.

QUEBEC OPPOSITION NOW 68%

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Walsh said, his voice shaky with grief.

The Van Doo regiment took command of the mission only at the beginning of the month.

Already, pictures of the fallen soldiers are having an impact in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest in Canada.

Opposition grows in Quebec as soldiers' bodies come home; Military expected Taliban to retreat rather than

An opinion poll this week found that opposition to sending Quebec troops to Afghanistan increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent in the province after Longtin's death.

The shift in public opinion has also galvanized politicians, with Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe insisting Thursday that the Harper government commit clearly in a speech from the throne to the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Duceppe went so far as to say that committing to a withdrawal is a "minimal requirement" to earn the Bloc's support of a throne speech, which, in turn, is essential for the survival of the government itself.

Indeed, he suggested he is ready to bring down the government over the issue, so it can be debated in an election.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has already announced he will not extend the military mission without the consent of Parliament. In light of his minority, he requires the support of at least one opposition party.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, who has the most opposition votes to deliver on any issue, has said he wants the government to immediately advise its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role in 2009.

"We need to give them the time for the replacement," Dion reiterated Thursday, adding the announcement cannot be put off until a throne speech, which some expect in October. "It should be said now."

The latest casualties in Afghanistan bring the Canadian death toll to 70, including one diplomat, since the mission began in 2002.

Patrice Roy, a Radio-Canada reporter who was present but uninjured in Wednesday's explosion described it as "a huge, huge blast."

"It's difficult to describe ... it's difficult to imagine," Roy, the broadcaster's Ottawa bureau chief, recalled at a Kandahar news conference.

"We were at the end of a very difficult mission," he said. "They told us, 'The Taliban won't shoot because we're so many tanks. It's a demonstration of force, so they will run.'"

But, he added: "They didn't run. They were there, they attacked the convoy, they attacked the first soldiers that were there."

"It's a scene that's difficult to imagine. People were not panicking, but it was so serious. And we didn't know if other mines would be there. So you had to walk to get the bodies," Roy said.

His cameraman, Charles Dubois, was in stable condition Thursday after the amputation of his leg below the knee.

He was to be evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

Dubois' injury sparked comment on the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on TV talk shows were questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of fire.

Surprisingly, however, the mood at the Canadian Forces recruiting centre in downtown Montreal was upbeat. Young men, apparently unconcerned about the latest carnage in far-away Kandahar province, came in looking for information on how to sign up for military service.

Opposition grows in Quebec as soldiers' bodies come home; Military expected Taliban to retreat rather than

"It doesn't make me afraid," said Christian Gallant, 35. "If anything, it motivates me even more."

Unless the mission to Afghanistan is extended, however, fresh recruits will not see action because it takes about four years to go through all the training necessary to be sent to such dangerous places, said Maj. Guy Paquin, a recruitment centre commanding officer.

Canada currently has about 2,500 troops serving in Afghanistan.

# Strapped Forces recruiting retirees; Experience in high demand, says letter to 2,000 ex-soldiers

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240003  
**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A1 / FRONT  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Journal Stock / (Lt.-Gen. Walter) Natynczyk;  
**KEYWORDS:** ARMED FORCES  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** Ottawa Citizen; CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 570

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OTTAWA – The Canadian Forces has asked former soldiers to rejoin the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent at the end of March by Lt.-Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non-commissioned officers, captains and majors, saying their services are needed to shore up the army.

The general said the military is "facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, the general said experienced personnel are in high demand.

"We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," writes Natynczyk, vice-chief of the Defence staff.

A retired officer who received one of the letters said he was told the Afghan war is overstretching the army and that experienced personnel are desperately needed both to train new recruits at home and to fill vacancies left by the soldiers who are in Afghanistan. The bulk of that 2,500-member contingent is from the army, but an exact breakdown was not available.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army needs to have at least the same number training back in Canada, ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non-commissioned officers are in particularly high demand for international missions because of their experience. But the army also needs them to train new recruits at home.

Canada's regular army is about 21,300 strong with 23,900 reservists, military officials said Thursday.

A posting on the Defence Department's website says retired officers are needed in the infantry, armoured units, artillery, intelligence, and electrical and mechanical engineering areas, among others. Among non-commissioned members, the army is seeking artillerymen, weapons technicians, combat engineers, infantry and others.

Natynczyk writes that instructors are needed for training, full-time support at reserve units and to staff national or international headquarters.

The military needs to be able to train more soldiers to meet its commitments and ensure a quality of life for troops and their families, he adds.

Military spokesman Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky said Thursday the letter was sent to about 2,000 former captains, majors and senior NCOs. About 200 have expressed interest in rejoining, he added.

The letter was also later posted on a Forces website.

"By recruiting people who have previous CF experience, this allows us, obviously, to use them immediately in supervisory roles or specialist roles," Babinsky said.

He did not have information about whether more letters would be sent to specific people.

Natynczyk's letter said the military is open to welcoming back personnel in the regular forces, the reserves or as civilians.

The Forces is mainly looking for a full-time commitment, but "we are also willing to be flexible in the amount of time you commit." The general wanted to hear from retirees by June 15, but added that applications would also be taken after that date.

In the past, military officials have said the Forces is exceeding its targets for new recruits, but there is a growing concern about a possible exodus of retirees over the next decade.

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of Defence staff, has acknowledged the potential wave of retirements. But in an interview earlier this year, he suggested the situation might not be as bad as predicted, adding that he is hearing from a growing number of soldiers who have 15 to 25 years of service, but who are willing to stay in the ranks.

"Over the last three to six months as I'm travelling around the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, folks are coming up to me and saying, 'You know, general, a couple of years ago I couldn't wait to get my 20 or 25 years in and go, (but) now I want to stay forever,' " he said.



# Stretch of Ontario's 401 dubbed 'Highway of Heroes'

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240347  
**PUBLICATION:** The Winnipeg  
Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 9  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** TORONTO  
**WORD COUNT:** 211

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A stretch of Ontario highway that's become a sombre repatriation route for soldiers felled in Afghanistan, drawing impromptu gatherings of mourners saluting that sacrifice, is set to be renamed in their honour, the province said yesterday.

The 170-kilometre stretch of Highway 401 between the eastern Ontario airbase where the flag-drapped coffins of fallen soldiers arrive and the forensics centre in Toronto that receives them has been dubbed the Highway of Heroes.

More than 14,000 people have signed an electronic petition to officially rename that stretch of highway, where people gather on overpasses to wave flags, display placards of support, and salute the processions of hearses and limousines.

Yesterday, Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield said there were "no barriers to making this happen."

"I think when you consider the sacrifice that the soldiers and others have made, it's just a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on that sacrifice and to be able to acknowledge it," Cansfield said in a phone interview.

"There's no reason not to do it. All we need to do now is get into the process of how quickly we can do it."

Highway 401, the country's busiest, is currently named the MacDonald-Cartier Freeway. The government says it's considering several options in terms of dedicating a portion of the highway.

James Forbes, 22, who's behind the petition said he's surprised he's attracted so much attention.

"I am so happy," said Forbes, a London, Ont., resident who said he one day plans to enlist in the military.  
**KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

# Brief triumph Strike against Taliban a success, then 3 killed by hidden bomb

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**SOURCETAG:** 0708240346

**PUBLICATION:** The Winnipeg Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 9

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by Reuters Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, of 5th Field Ambulance, Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, of Royal 22nd Regiment.

**BYLINE:** CP

**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

**WORD COUNT:** 277

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A triumphant tactical success for Quebec-based troops lasted mere seconds before the blast that shattered any celebration and spilled Canadian and Afghan blood.

The deaths of two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV cameraman destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the fresh troops won the all-day battle for a dusty Afghan hill.

Canadian battlegroup commander Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier said the mission called Operation Eagle Eye was still a success, despite the deaths of Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the Royal 22nd Regiment, Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Field Ambulance and an Afghan interpreter.

"We obtained our objectives, we secured a corridor to link up with Afghan authorities and push reconstruction projects," Gauthier said yesterday.

## JOURNALISTS WOUNDED

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was in the back of the armoured vehicle, preparing a report on the 13-hour battle, when the bomb exploded and seriously wounded his cameraman, Charles Dubois.

"I was preparing the stand-up for my report to say the operation was a success," Roy told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

"At the moment I was writing, there was an immense explosion and I was thrown to the rear. I woke up eight seconds later. Charles was next to me, the others were thrown from the vehicle."

At least five Canadian vehicles, including a minesweeper, had passed over the track before the explosion.

"There is no training to prepare us to get through that," said Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand.

"But the two soldiers died doing the work they love."

The casualties were all taken by U.S. helicopter to the main base at Kandahar Airfield.

The hill sits in the Zhari district, about 50 kilometres west of Kandahar. Zhari and Panjwaii district, just to the south, are Taliban hotbeds that have seen many battles between Canadian troops and insurgents in the past 18 months.

Several times strategic spots have fallen into Taliban hands, only to be retaken by Canadian troops.

The situation has improved greatly compared to a year ago, Gauthier said.

"Last year in the district of Zhari and Panjwaii, it was total war," Gauthier said.

Troops are trying to expand a "security bubble" to allow supply convoys to pass with greater security through the area. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Honour our heroes, but not with a highway

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240684

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion

**PAGE:** 21

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by Pete Fisher, Sun Media Should the 172 km stretch of the 401 between Toronto and Trenton be renamed "The Highway of Heroes" as a memorial to Canada's fallen soldiers? Premier Dalton McGuinty says he'll consider the idea, but columnist Woodcock disagrees.

**BYLINE:** CONNIE WOODCOCK

**WORD COUNT:** 490

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They call it the Highway of Heroes — that stretch of Hwy. 401 between Trenton and Toronto along which travel the sad processions of hearses carrying the bodies of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

Most of them are repatriated to CFB Trenton and then sent to Toronto for autopsy before being returned to their home towns across the country, and it has become a bit of a tragic tradition for television cameras to record these final journeys.

The images of flag-draped caskets rolling up the highway and the crowds of people who come out to line the overpasses to pay their respects are hard to put out of your mind. You'd have to be one hard-hearted Canadian to fail to be moved by the sight, so often repeated in the last few months.

Now, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has said he'll officially consider redesignating those 172 kms "The Highway of Heroes" as a memorial, and a lot of people seem to think that's a good idea. The talk shows have been effusive. And as the Toronto Sun reported yesterday, there's even an online petition you can sign to put pressure on the premier.

Presumably, this would mean there would be some sort of new signage along the route to let people know this particular hunk of the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway has a new name.

Sadly, I have to disagree. It's inappropriate in several ways. It ignores all kinds of other heroes, for one thing, and for another it's an oversize serving of sentimental slop that is even a touch creepy.

Tell me, how would you like to be a young soldier being shipped out to Afghanistan and have to view signs reminding you that the next time you travel that road you may be in your casket?

When you drive the highways in Ontario these days, you occasionally come across cheesy plastic wreaths propped up on small white crosses at spots where fatal accidents have happened. The Highway of Heroes idea fits into that same category, if you ask me. Next thing you know we'll be piling up plastic wreaths around the base of the 401 sign that reads "Trenton next two exits."

And what about McGuinty's apparent willingness to go along with the idea? Let's not forget there's a provincial election coming up and this sort of meaningless gesture could be politically helpful, appealing as it does to cheap sentiment. And best of all, for a politician, unlike any of the other stuff the premier has promised lately, it's almost free, give or take a few road signs.

That's the kind of thing that gives politics and politicians a bad name.

Since Quebec's Van Doos were sent to Afghanistan recently, there has been a lot of talk in that province about the war and how it's been politicized too much. The Highway of Heroes idea takes such politicization that much further down a road we don't need to travel.

## TWO GREAT CANADIANS

No, let's leave the 401 alone to honour two great Canadians, one from each founding group: Jacques Cartier the great explorer and Sir John A Macdonald, our first prime minister.

And let's memorialize our soldiers in the best way possible — by coming together from coast to coast and supporting their mission until the day it's over.

That's what they, and their comrades still in Afghanistan, would want.

# Triumphant mood was short-lived Two Van Doos died just after regiment conquered a dusty hill

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**SOURCETAG:** 0708240660  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** 3 photos 1. photo of CHARLES DUBOIS Wounded 2. Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne were killed by a bomb in Afghanistan on Wednesday.  
**BYLINE:** MARTIN OUELLET, CP  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR  
**WORD COUNT:** 341

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A triumphant tactical success for Quebec-based troops lasted mere seconds before the blast that shattered any celebration and spilled Canadian and Afghan blood.

The deaths of two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV cameraman destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the fresh troops won the all-day battle for a dusty Afghan hill.

The Canadian battlegroup commander, Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier, said yesterday the mission called Operation Eagle Eye was still a success, despite the deaths of Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the Royal 22nd Regiment, Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Field Ambulance and an Afghan interpreter.

"We obtained our objectives, we secured a corridor to link up with Afghan authorities and push reconstruction projects," Gauthier said.

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was in the back of the armoured vehicle, preparing a report on the 13-hour battle, when the bomb exploded and seriously wounded his cameraman, Charles Dubois.

At least five Canadian vehicles, including a minesweeper, had passed over the track before the explosion.

"There is no training to prepare us to get through that," Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand said. "But the two soldiers died doing the work they love."

The casualties were all taken by U.S. helicopter to the main base at Kandahar Airfield.

## TALIBAN HOTBED

The hill sits in the Zhari district, about 50 km west of Kandahar. Zhari and Panjwaii district, just to the south, are Taliban hotbeds that have seen many battles between Canadian troops and insurgents in the past 18 months. Several times strategic spots have fallen into Taliban hands, only to be retaken by Canadian troops.

The situation has improved greatly compared to a year ago, Gauthier said.

"Last year in the district of Zhari and Panjwahi, it was total war," Gauthier said. There were no more civilians in there, all you saw was what you saw in World War II, where artillery would fire, the tanks would roll and clear the region."

The area is also a popular route for armed bands of drug traffickers who have their own interest in undermining law and order.

"There is a group of terrorists involved in drug trafficking who aren't only attacking (NATO) forces, but also Afghan security forces and civilians," Gauthier said.

Canadian troops are getting better at detecting the mines and bombs that are triggered by remote control or pressure plates. Gauthier said 80 or 90% of IEDs are discovered before they blow. KEYWORDS=CANADA

# Duceppe wants exit date for troops

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240659  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** photo of GILLES DUCEPPE Pulls support  
**BYLINE:** KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**WORD COUNT:** 197

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper is under mounting pressure to table a firm plan to withdraw Canadian troops from Afghanistan after the deaths of three Quebec-based soldiers.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe warned yesterday he would vote against a Conservative throne speech and try to topple the minority Conservative government if it doesn't promise an exit date for combat troops.

"Stephen Harper needs to be very clear that the military presence of troops in Kandahar ends in February 2009," Duceppe said. "Canada has done its part."

Speaking one day after a roadside blast killed two Van Doos soldiers and injured two Canadian journalists, Duceppe said he would not "exploit the emotions" of Quebecers by calling for an immediate pullout. But he insisted Canada must advise NATO allies now so other countries can prepare to replace Canadian troops.

## FLAWED MISSION

NDP Leader Jack Layton said it makes no sense to carry on a flawed mission.

"Mr. Duceppe and Mr. Dion seem to be debating the different ways to have the mission continue to 2009, then end it at that time. But if it's the wrong mission in 2009, it's the wrong mission now," he told Sun Media.

Harper has said he would not extend the military mission without consensus in Parliament, but has not said when the issue would be debated.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said he won't "make threats" like Duceppe, but also demanded Harper notify NATO of Canada's planned departure. KEYWORDS=CANADA



# Reporter says death scene 'difficult to imagine'

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240658  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** photo of PATRICE ROY "So serious"  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR  
**WORD COUNT:** 250

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A Radio-Canada reporter who survived a roadside bomb attack that killed two Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter said yesterday the horrific nature of the blast is hard to describe.

Patrice Roy, 44, told reporters at the Canadian base in Kandahar that he was writing his report inside the moving armoured vehicle just seconds before the explosion.

"It's a huge, huge blast. It's a scene that's difficult to imagine," said the Ottawa-based reporter, adding that a medic sitting next to him was one of the two soldiers who died.

"It's a scene that it's difficult to imagine — people were not panicking but it was so serious," he said.

"We didn't know if other mines would be there and we had to walk (through suspect ground) to get the body" he said. The attack happened in the Zhari district about 50 km west of Kandahar city on the first major combat operation for the Quebec-based Van Doos regiment in Afghanistan, named Operation Eagle Eye.

## LEG AMPUTATED

Two Canadian soldiers were killed in the blast. Another Canadian soldier was wounded, along with Radio-Canada cameraman Charles Dubois, who had one of his legs amputated below the knee.

Roy says the explosion happened shortly after a minesweeper had finished clearing a track on the road so the convoy of tanks and armoured vehicles could follow.

Roy was treated for shock and released. He said he will leave Afghanistan to accompany Dubois, 29, to a U.S. military hospital in Germany.

"My mission was to come (to Afghanistan) with Charles and to leave with Charles," Roy said. "He needs care and I will leave with him. Beyond the journalistic mission, I have a moral commitment," he said of his decision to stay at his cameraman's side. **KEYWORDS=CANADA**

# FRONTPAGE 2 MORE KILLED As Pte. Longtin's body is saluted on Highway of Heroes ...

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**SOURCETAG** 0708230814

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.23

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 1

**ILLUSTRATION:** 1. photo by Pete Fisher, Sun Media Van Doos, interpreter die in roadside explosion in Afghanistan; 2 journalists wounded 2. photo of KATIE MANCHESTER 'I am mad at the guys who killed my parents'

**WORD COUNT:** 0

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# Police stick with ribbon campaign City's cruisers to sport decals honouring Canadian troops

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240269

**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 5

**ILLUSTRATION:** 1. photo by Jacques Boissinot, CP Flowers are attached to a fence yesterday at CFB Valcartier, Que. to honour Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier and Master Corp. Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance, based at Valcartier, who were killed Wednesday in Afghanistan. 2. graphic

**BYLINE:** JON WILLING, SUN MEDIA

**WORD COUNT:** 313

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The Ottawa Police Service is standing by its decision to salute Canadian troops with a special sticker on its vehicles — even though similar campaigns have sparked controversy in other communities.

The force will soon stick "Support Our Troops" decals on marked cruisers, even though the presence of Canadian troops in Afghanistan has divided the country.

Chief Vernon White said he has "absolutely no difficulty whatsoever" endorsing the decals, which will be put on cruisers in the coming weeks.

## 'OPPORTUNITY'

White said it's a "huge opportunity" for officers to show support for Canada's military men and women and he doesn't believe it should be blown up into a political issue.

The decision is operational in nature, meaning no resolution is necessary at the police board, White said.

The small stickers are simply a yellow ribbon with a Canadian flag and the words "Support Our Troops" written inside.

In Toronto, city council endorsed the decision to put the decals on emergency vehicles, reacting to an earlier decision to remove the stickers. But the police union there is upset that the force hasn't yet outfitted its cruisers with the yellow ribbons, despite the endorsement from city council.

Meanwhile, in Calgary, the city is not allowing any "Support Our Troops" decals on municipal vehicles.

The Vancouver police service is the latest law enforcement agency to give the 10–4 to putting yellow-ribbon stickers on cruisers.

The controversy stems from the greater debate about what the sticker signifies.

Some say it's a sign of support for the war in Afghanistan, while others say it's simply a show of support for military personnel there. Others see it as a sign of both.

Henry Jensen, chairman of the Ottawa police services board, said the decision to go ahead with the decals wouldn't need to come before the board because it's an operational fleet matter.

'NO-BRAINER'

Jensen, a former RCMP deputy commissioner, said to him it's a logical decision to put the yellow ribbons on police vehicles.

"I have no difficulty with it whatsoever," Jensen said.

Coun. Bob Monette, also a member of the police board, called the decision a "no-brainer" and said he's "fully in support" of the move.

Monette said he doesn't expect any backlash, noting the city has embraced the idea of wearing red on Fridays to support Canadian troops.

Coun. Maria McRae, vice-chair of the police board, said she also "strongly supports" the decals.

It's "too bad, so sad" for those who don't agree with the decision, McRae said, adding the decal "simply means what it says." KEYWORDS=OTTAWA AND REGION; NATIONAL

# Departure demand Bloc Quebecois promises to topple government without Afghan exit date

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**SOURCETAG:** 0708240265

**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 4

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by CP Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier were killed when their light armoured vehicle hit an improvised explosive device.

**BYLINE:** KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU

**WORD COUNT:** 443

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper is under mounting pressure to table a firm plan to withdraw Canadian troops from the war in Afghanistan after the deaths of three Quebec-based soldiers.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe warned yesterday he would vote against a Conservative Throne Speech and try to topple the minority Conservative government if it doesn't promise an exit date for combat troops.

"Stephen Harper needs to be very clear that the military presence of troops in Kandahar ends in February 2009," Duceppe said. "It is a minimal requirement. Canada has done its part. It's time other countries relieved it."

Speaking one day after a roadside blast killed two Van Doo soldiers and an interpreter and injured two journalists, Duceppe said he would not "exploit the emotions" of Quebecers by calling for an immediate pullout. But he insisted Canada must advise NATO allies now so other countries can prepare to replace Canadian troops.

## FLAWED MISSION

NDP Leader Jack Layton said it makes no sense to carry on a flawed mission for 18 more months.

"Mr. Duceppe and Mr. Dion seem to be debating the different ways to have the mission continue to 2009 then end it at that time. But if it's the wrong mission in 2009, it's the wrong mission now and I would urge them to reconsider their support for Mr. Harper's two-year extension," he told Sun Media.

Layton said he will continue to press for an immediate withdrawal when Parliament resumes in the fall. Harper has said he would not extend the military mission without consensus in Parliament, but has not said when the issue would be debated.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said he won't "make threats" like Duceppe, but also demanded Harper notify NATO of Canada's planned departure.

"I don't want to play politics on the backs of victims. The fundamental point is that Canada must be clear on its engagements, on its involvement," he said. "Canada has done its share in the combat operations. We would like the prime minister to be clear with our allies instead of entertaining this ambiguity."

Dion said the Liberals might support Canadian troops remaining past 2009, working on training, development and humanitarian initiatives instead of combat.

## BIG IMPACT

While many pundits think support for the mission and for Harper's government will be crushed by Quebec casualties, Concordia University political scientist Julian Schofield doesn't expect a big impact.

"They realize that many francophones do want to join the army and do want to go on these strange, imperial adventures," he said.

"They don't see it as the equivalent of the draft of the First and Second World Wars that caused mass rioting and deaths because these soldiers are volunteers."

NDP MP Dawn Black accused the Liberals and BQ of trying to "keep one foot on both sides" of what is a "search and kill."

"Too many civilians are dying, we're not making the kind of difference in the lives Canadians would wish us to and too many Canadians have been injured and killed along the way in a mission that was never well thought out or stood a great chance of success," she said. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Reporter recalls immense blast

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240264  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** photo of PATRICE ROY Thrown back  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN  
**WORD COUNT:** 182

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A triumphant tactical success for Quebec-based troops lasted mere seconds before the blast that shattered any celebration and spilled Canadian and Afghan blood.

The deaths of two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV cameraman destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the fresh troops won the all-day battle for a dusty Afghan hill.

Canadian battle group commander Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier said the mission called Operation Eagle Eye was still a success, despite the deaths of Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment, Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance and an Afghan interpreter.

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was in the back of the armoured vehicle, preparing a report on the 13-hour battle, when the bomb exploded and seriously wounded his cameraman, Charles Dubois.

"I was preparing the stand-up for my report to say the operation was a success," Roy told reporters.

"At the moment I was writing, there was an immense explosion and I was thrown to the rear. I woke up eight seconds later. Charles was next to me, the others were thrown from the vehicle."

"There is no training to prepare us to get through that," said Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand.

"But the two soldiers died doing the work they love." KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# U.S. forces back in Tora Bora, fighting al-Qaida; Taliban fighters have returned to the area of Osama bin Laden's cave complex. This time escape routes are blocked

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240016  
**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A5

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Agence France-Presse files / Osama bin Laden is thought to be hiding in a tribal region near the Afghan-Pakistan border. ; Colour Photo: Reuters files / Anti-Taliban Afghan fighters watch explosions from U.S. bombings in the mountainous area of Tora Bora, where the Taliban's growing presence was first noted about 21/2 months ago. Osama bin Laden is believed to be close to the border in a Pakistani tribal region opposite Tora Bora. ;

**KEYWORDS:** TERRORISM; WAR  
**BYLINE:** Tom Coghlan  
**SOURCE:** Daily Telegraph  
**WORD COUNT:** 711

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Osama bin Laden's concrete-lined swimming pool fed by a mountain stream still lies, half destroyed, at the entrance to his cave complex at Tora Bora.

Close to the caves, which have been dynamited shut, is a rusting 1980s Soviet tank; bullets and scraps of camouflage clothing litter the ground.

Six years after U.S. special forces failed to capture the al-Qaida leader in his mountain stronghold, the place where the Sept. 11 attacks were hatched, American troops are again scouring the mountains of Tora Bora.

A week ago U.S. forces launched a major operation to counter a rejuvenated al-Qaida, which has been steadily regrouping in the tribal areas of Pakistan, and has in the past three months moved back into the Tora Bora area of Afghanistan.

American military officials say much of what is happening around Tora Bora remains "classified." Discreetly, Western officials in Kabul describe it as "very successful," trapping insurgents in a series of adjacent valleys.

Local people report that the fighters include Arabs, Chinese Muslims, Chechens and a large contingent of Uzbeks led by Tahir Yuldashev. The Uzbeks are a surviving remnant of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an al-Qaida affiliate that fought with the Taliban against the Americans in 2001.

Afghan leaders say the Uzbeks were recently given the choice to fight the Americans in Afghanistan or face annihilation by the local tribes. At least one sizable group of al-Qaida and Taliban fighters continues to resist despite heavy bombing raids and attacks from U.S. special forces. American military spokesmen declined to corroborate the claim.



"Five hundred infiltrated the area," said Gen. Qadim Shah, the commander of 1st Brigade, Afghan Army in Nangahar. "We have captured 57 fighters from the Taliban and al-Qaida. They include Chechens, Arabs and Uzbeks."

Gen. Dan McNeill, the NATO commander, moved a battalion from 82nd Airborne, which makes up his operational reserve in Afghanistan, from Helmand to support the operation. Pakistani troops are also reported to have taken up blocking positions along the border. The Daily Telegraph was the first Western newspaper to reach the area of the fighting, thanks to help from local tribesmen who smuggled us in along the only access road. Three U.S. special forces soldiers and their translator were killed on the approaches to the caves last week and Western officials say two helicopters have also been damaged in the fighting.

It took several hours on foot, accompanied by a small group of armed tribesmen and an Afghan intelligence officer, to reach the cave complex bin Laden built prior to 2001. Taliban fighters had last been reported in the area the day before, when they severely beat a number of local villagers. The intelligence officer contacted U.S. forces by phone to forestall the danger of an air attack.

Newly built Taliban stone firing positions were visible close to the track. So, too, were US propaganda leaflets dropped as the operation began, warning local people not to aid the insurgents.

Four hundred families are reported displaced from the remote area and at least seven local people killed by bombing.

"We are very scared," said Noor Mohammad Khan, who farms near Tora Bora. "Every night they are bombing the next valley. Last night they dropped troops from helicopters on the top of this hill and they walked through this area."

In 2001 the U.S. was widely criticized for relying on local militias, who reputedly took bribes to allow the majority of al-Qaida's key leadership to escape. This time American forces were dropped unexpectedly into the area by helicopter, blocking escape routes.

The growing presence of al-Qaida and Taliban fighters in the area was first noted around 21/2 months ago. Taliban "night letters" in local villages announced a new "Tora Bora Front" under the leadership of Maulawi Anwar ul-Haq Mujahed, son of prominent Mujahideen commander Younis Khalis, who fought the Soviet occupation. Dr. Amin ul-Haq, who has been listed by the US government as bin Laden's security coordinator, was also with the force. Local leaders say Amin was injured in a raid and smuggled back across the border.

"I don't think that the biggest al-Qaida people are on this side of the border, but they are close by, just over the border," said one local tribal leader.

Western intelligence has placed bin Laden close to the border, probably in the tribal region of Khurram, which lies opposite Tora Bora, during recent months.

# U.S. forces back in Tora Bora, fighting al-Qaida; Taliban fighters have returned to the area of Osama bin Laden's cave. This time escape routes are blocked

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240015

**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final C

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A5

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Reuters, Files / Anti-Taliban Afghan fighters watch explosions from U.S. bombings in the mountainous area of Tora Bora, where the Taliban's growing presence was first noted about 21/2 months ago. Osama bin Laden is believed to be close to the border in a Pakistani tribal region opposite Tora Bora. ; Colour Photo: Agence France-Presse, Files / Osama bin Laden is thought to be hiding in a tribal region near the Afghan-Pakistan border. ;

**KEYWORDS:** TERRORISM; WAR

**BYLINE:** Tom Coghlan

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# Injured journalists told 'Taliban won't shoot'; Convoy attacked on Van Doo's first major combat operation

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240013  
**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A4  
**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR AIRFIELD,  
Afghanistan  
**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 371

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — They were told it would be a relatively easy mission, that the Taliban would likely flee before the demonstration of Canadian firepower.

But about 13 hours into Operation Eagle Eye, Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy and cameraman Charles Dubois were still holed up in a LAV-III armoured vehicle as Canadian Forces exchanged fire with the insurgents.

Finally, it appeared the Canadians were ready to seize Gundy Ghar, a hill west of Kandahar City that had recently lapsed back into Taliban control.

As their vehicle rolled over the hill, Roy, 44, was preparing to write a TV report hailing the success of the Van Doo regiment's first major combat operation. It was then he felt the "huge blast," Roy said Thursday in a harrowing account of the attack that killed two Canadian soldiers and one Afghan interpreter.

"It's a scene that's difficult to imagine. People were not panicking, but it was so serious. And we didn't know if other mines would be there. So you had to walk to get the bodies," said Roy, the broadcaster's Ottawa bureau chief.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne of the 5th Ambulance company and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (the Van Doo) based in Valcartier, Que., were killed in the blast from an improvised explosive device.

"We're brothers in arms. We just lost two more brothers today," said Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier of the Van Doo, which assumed command of Canada's military operations here this month.

"Our aim is to continue the mission. We strongly believe in what we're doing here."

A third Canadian soldier and Dubois were also injured in the explosion. Dubois was in stable condition Thursday, but his leg had to be amputated below the knee. He was to be evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

Dubois' injury is sure to invite scrutiny of the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on talk shows were already questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of fire.

Roy talked of the tragedy in a Kandahar news conference. "We were at the end of a very difficult mission," he said. "They told us, 'The Taliban won't shoot because we're so many tanks. It's a demonstration of force, so they will run.'"

But, he added, "They didn't run. They were there. They attacked the convoy. They attacked the first soldiers that were there."

Roy said he did not come to Afghanistan for the adrenalin rush, but to better understand the war.

# Quebec support for war mission drops; Politicians look for withdrawal commitment

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240012

**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A4

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Department of National Defence / Canadian soldiers greet Afghan kids during a patrol in Kandahar City. As the Canadian death toll mounts, the mission to Afghanistan is under greater scrutiny — particularly in Quebec, home of the Van Doo. ;

**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda and Nicole Baer

**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service

**WORD COUNT:** 577

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As Quebec prepares to receive the bodies of two more soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Canada faces growing emotional and political turmoil about the military mission to the war-torn country.

Disbelief, sorrow and pain were obvious at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, Que., on Thursday as soldiers tried to come to terms with the deaths of two more comrades.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Ambulance Company, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (known in English Canada as the Van Doo), were killed Wednesday, the same day as the flag-draped coffin of Pte. Simon Longtin, killed Sunday, returned to Canada.

On Thursday, Peter Walsh, a personal friend of Duchesne's, drove from Petawawa, Ont., to pay his respects and lay flowers at the entrance gate of Valcartier, just outside Quebec City.

"I am sad and deeply touched," said Walsh, who just returned from Afghanistan two weeks ago. Wiping tears from his cheeks, Walsh praised the soldiers' accomplishments.

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Walsh said, his voice shaky with grief.

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The shift in public opinion has also galvanized politicians, with Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe insisting Thursday that the Harper government commit clearly in a speech from the throne to the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Duceppe went so far as to say that committing to a withdrawal is a "minimal requirement" to earn the Bloc's support of a throne speech, which, in turn, is essential for the survival of the government itself. Indeed, he

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"We need to give them the time for the replacement," Dion reiterated Thursday, adding the announcement cannot be put off until a throne speech, which some expect in October. "It should be said now."

Canada has about 2,500 troops serving in Afghanistan.

The latest casualties in Afghanistan bring the Canadian death toll to 70, including one diplomat, since the mission began in 2002.

"It was a huge, huge blast," recalled Patrice Roy, a Radio-Canada reporter who was present but uninjured in Wednesday's blast. "It's difficult to describe ... it's difficult to imagine."

Surprisingly, however, the mood at the Canadian Forces recruiting centre in downtown Montreal was upbeat. Young men, apparently unconcerned about the latest carnage in far-away Kandahar province, came in looking for information on how to sign up for military service.

"It doesn't make me afraid," said Christian Gallant, 35. "If anything, it motivates me even more."

Unless the mission to Afghanistan is extended, however, new recruits will not see action as it takes about four years to go through all the training necessary to be sent to such dangerous places, said Maj. Guy Paquin, a recruitment centre commanding officer.

# Forces short on soldiers, asks veterans to re-enlist

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240007

**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A1 / FRONT

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Department of National Defence / Master Cpl.Christian Duchesne of the 5th Ambulance Company and ... ; Colour Photo: Department of National Defence / ... Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment were killed in Afghanistan on Wednesday. Story, A4 ;

**KEYWORDS:** ARMED FORCES; DEFENCE

**DATELINE:** OTTAWA

**BYLINE:** David Pugliese

**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service

**WORD COUNT:** 606

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OTTAWA --- The Canadian Forces has sent a request to experienced ex-military personnel to rejoin the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent at the end of March by Lt.-Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non-commissioned officers, captains and majors saying their services are needed to shore up the army.

The general points out the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, the general states there is a high demand for experienced personnel.

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The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan mission are from the army but an exact breakdown is not available.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same amount training back in Canada ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non-commissioned officers are in particularly high demand for international missions because of their experience.

But in a catch-22, the army also needs them to train new recruits at home.

Canada's regular army is around 21,300 strong with 23,900 reservists, military officials said Thursday.



In a posting on the Defence Department's website, the military points out that retired officers are needed for jobs in the infantry, armour, artillery, intelligence, and electrical and mechanical engineering areas, among others.

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The military needs to increase its ability to train more soldiers to meet its commitments and ensure a quality of life for troops and their families, he adds.

Military spokesman Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky said Thursday the letter was specifically sent to around 2,000 former captains, majors and senior NCOs.

About 200 have indicated an interest in rejoining, he added.

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In the past, military officials have said the Canadian Forces is exceeding its targets for new recruits but there is a growing concern the Forces will face an exodus of experienced personnel as large numbers reach retirement age over the next decade.

A report prepared in 2006 for the Defence Department warned that between this year and 2020, the Canadian Forces will experience a significantly higher rate of attrition as baby boomers hit retirement age.

Gen. Rick Hillier, chief of the defence staff, has acknowledged the potential for the military to face a wave of retirements in the near future.

But he suggested in an interview with the Ottawa Citizen earlier this year the situation might not be as bad as predicted, adding he's hearing from a growing number of soldiers who have 15 to 25 years of service but who are willing to stay in the ranks.

Said the general: "I will tell you — this is the absolute God's truth here from Hillier's lips — over the last three to six months as I'm travelling around the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, folks are coming up to me and saying, 'You know general a couple of years ago I couldn't wait to get my 20 or 25 years in and go [but] now I want to stay forever.'"

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240003  
**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final C  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A1 / FRONT  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Department of National Defence / Master Cpl.Christian Duchesne (above) of the 5th Ambulance Company and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment were killed in Afghanistan on Wednesday. Story, A4 ; Colour Photo: Department of National Defence / Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier ;  
**KEYWORDS:** ARMED FORCES; DEFENCE  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 606

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But he suggested in an interview with the Ottawa Citizen earlier this year the situation might not be as bad as predicted, adding he's hearing from a growing number of soldiers who have 15 to 25 years of service but who are willing to stay in the ranks.

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# Emotions running high

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240023  
**PUBLICATION:** The Leader-Post (Regina)  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A7  
**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda and Nicole Baer  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 466

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As Quebec prepares to receive the bodies of two more soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Canada faces growing emotional and political turmoil about the military mission to the war-torn country.

Disbelief, sorrow and pain were obvious at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, Que., on Thursday as soldiers tried to come to terms with the deaths of two more comrades.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Ambulance Company, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (known in English Canada as the Van Doo), were killed Wednesday when their light armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb. Another soldier and a Radio-Canada cameraman were also injured in the incident at Gundy Ghar in the Panjwaii district of southern Afghanistan.

On the same day, the flag-draped coffin of Pte. Simon Longtin, killed Sunday, returned to Canada.

On Thursday, Peter Walsh, a personal friend of Duchesne's, drove from Petawawa, Ont., to pay his respects and lay flowers at the entrance gate of Valcartier, just outside Quebec City.

"I am sad and deeply touched," said Walsh, who just returned from Afghanistan two weeks ago. Wiping tears from his cheeks, Walsh praised the soldiers' accomplishments.

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Walsh said, his voice shaky with grief.

The Van Doo regiment took command of the mission only at the beginning of the month. Already, though, pictures of the fallen soldiers are having an impact in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest in Canada. Indeed, a CROP poll this week found that opposition to sending Quebec troops to Afghanistan increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent in the province after Longtin's death.

The shift in public opinion has also galvanized politicians, with Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe insisting Thursday that the Harper government commit clearly in a speech from the throne to the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan.

Duceppe went so far as to say that committing to a withdrawal is a "minimal requirement" to earn the Bloc's support of a throne speech, which, in turn, is essential for the survival of the government itself. Indeed, he suggested he is ready to bring down the government over the issue, so it can be debated in an election.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has already announced he will not extend the military mission without the

consent of Parliament. In light of his minority, he requires the support of at least one opposition party.

Liberal leader Stephane Dion, who has the most opposition votes to deliver on any issue, has said he wants the government to immediately advise its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role in 2009.

"We need to give them the time for the replacement," Dion reiterated Thursday, adding the announcement cannot be put off until a throne speech, which some expect in October. "It should be said now."

# Ex-personnel asked to rejoin

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240022  
**PUBLICATION:** The Leader-Post (Regina)  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A7  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: CanWest News Service / Maj. Guy Paquin, one of two commanding officers for armed forces recruiting in Quebec, was in the Canadian Forces Recruitment Centre on St. Catherine Street in Montreal on Thursday. ;  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 767

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OTTAWA — The Canadian Forces has sent a request to experienced ex-military personnel to rejoin the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the ongoing mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent at the end of March by Lt.-Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non-commissioned officers, captains and majors saying their services are needed to shore up the army.

The general points out the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, the general states there is a high demand for experienced personnel. "We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," writes Natynczyk, the vice-chief of the defence staff.

A retired officer who received one of the letters said he was told the Afghanistan war is overstressing the army and that experienced personnel are desperately required both to train new recruits at home and to fill ranks left vacant because of the number of soldiers who are in Afghanistan. The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan mission are from the army but an exact breakdown is not available.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same amount training back in Canada ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non-commissioned officers are in particularly high demand for international missions because of their experience. But in a catch-22, the army also needs them to train new recruits at home. Canada's regular army is around 21,300 strong with 23,900 reservists, military officials said Thursday.

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Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier has acknowledged the potential for the military to face a wave of retirements in the near future. But he suggested in an interview with the Ottawa Citizen earlier this year that the situation might not be as bad as predicted, adding that he is hearing from a growing number of soldiers who have 15 to 25 years of service but who are willing to stay in the ranks.

Explained the general: "I will tell you -- this is the absolute God's truth here from Hillier's lips -- over the last three to six months as I'm travelling around the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, folks are coming up to me and saying, 'You know general a couple of years ago I couldn't wait to get my 20 or 25 years in and go (but) now I want to stay forever.' "

# Pressure mounts on Harper to ensure plan of withdrawal plan

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240440  
**PUBLICATION:** The London Free Press  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A5  
**BYLINE:** KATHLEEN HARRIS, SUN MEDIA NATIONAL BUREAU  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**WORD COUNT:** 284

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper is under mounting pressure to table a firm plan to withdraw Canadian troops from the war in Afghanistan after the deaths of three Quebec-based soldiers.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe warned yesterday he would vote against a Conservative throne speech and try to topple the minority Conservative government if it doesn't promise an exit date for combat troops.

"Stephen Harper needs to be very clear that the military presence of troops in Kandahar ends in February 2009," Duceppe said. "It is a minimal requirement. Canada has done its part. It's time other countries relieved it."

Speaking one day after a roadside blast killed two Van Doos soldiers and an Afghan interpreter and injured two Canadian journalists, Duceppe said he would not "exploit the emotions" of Quebecers by calling for an immediate pullout.

But he insisted Canada must advise NATO allies now so other countries can prepare to replace Canadian troops.

NDP Leader Jack Layton said it makes no sense to carry on a flawed mission for 18 more months.

"Mr. Duceppe and Mr. Dion seem to be debating the different ways to have the mission continue to 2009 then end it at that time. But if it's the wrong mission in 2009, it's the wrong mission now and I would urge them to reconsider their support for Mr. Harper's two-year extension."

Layton said he will continue to press for an immediate withdrawal when Parliament resumes in the fall.

Harper has said he would not extend the military mission without consensus in Parliament, but has not said when the issue would be debated.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said he won't "make threats" like Duceppe, but also demanded Harper notify NATO of Canada's planned departure.

"I don't want to play politics on the backs of victims. The fundamental point is that Canada must be clear on its engagements, on its involvement," he said.

"Canada has done its share in the combat operations. We would like the prime minister to be clear with our allies instead of entertaining this ambiguity."



Dion said the Liberals might support Canadian troops remaining past 2009, working on training, development and humanitarian initiatives instead of combat. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Tactical success preceded killer blast

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240439  
**PUBLICATION:** The London Free Press  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A5  
**BYLINE:** MARTIN OUELLET, CP  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN  
**WORD COUNT:** 199

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A triumphant tactical success for Quebec-based troops lasted mere seconds before the blast that shattered any celebration and spilled Canadian and Afghan blood.

The deaths of two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV camera operator destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the fresh troops won the all-day battle for a dusty Afghan hill.

Canadian battlegroup commander Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier said the mission called Operation Eagle Eye was still a success, despite the deaths of the two Canadians and an Afghan interpreter.

"We obtained our objectives, we secured a corridor to link up with Afghan authorities and push reconstruction projects," Gauthier said yesterday.

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was in the back of the armoured vehicle preparing a report on the 13-hour battle when the bomb exploded and seriously wounded his camera operator, Charles Dubois.

"I was preparing the stand-up for my report to say the operation was a success," Roy said.

"At the moment I was writing, there was an immense explosion and I was thrown to the rear. I woke up eight seconds later. Charles was next to me, the others were thrown from the vehicle."

At least five Canadian vehicles, including a minesweeper, had passed over the track before the explosion.

"There is no training to prepare us to get through that," said Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand.

"But the two soldiers died doing the work they love."

The hill sits in the Zhari district, west of Kandahar. Zhari and Panjwaili district, just to the south, are Taliban hotbeds. **KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

# Quebec troops close ranks to honour fallen comrades Meanwhile, opposition leaders take to the province's airwaves in search of political points.

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**SOURCETAG:** 0708240437

**PUBLICATION:** The London Free Press

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A5

**ILLUSTRATION:** 2 photos 1. photo of MASTER WARRANT OFFICER MARIO MERCIER 2. photo of MASTER CPL. CHRISTIAN DUCHESNE

**BYLINE:** JONATHAN MONTPETIT, CP

**DATELINE:** MONTREAL

**WORD COUNT:** 207

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The lure of potential political points drew federal opposition politicians to Quebec airwaves yesterday to criticize the Afghan mission, while military leaders in the province stood firmly behind by the effort.

Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, died in a roadside bomb on Wednesday, the same day the body of Quebecer Pte. Simon Longtin was brought back to Canada.

But as Canada's politician's jockeyed for position on the contentious debate, soldiers at Canadian Forces Bases Valcartier closed ranks in honour of their comrades.

"The men and women in Afghanistan right now want to complete the mission they were given. They want to make a difference," Lt.-Col. Hercule Gosselin said at the base near Quebec City.

"They understand why we're in Afghanistan. Their families also understand and that's why they support us."

Commander Patrice Carriere admitted it was difficult standing on Duchesne's doorstep as he prepared to tell his wife, a mother of three young girls, that her husband had been killed.

"You take a deep breath, count to three and then you go . . . there is just no easy way of doing it."

The deaths represent the first fatalities for the newly deployed soldiers from CFB Valcartier, home to several regiments including the Royal 22nd Regiment known also as the Van Doos.

The deaths will test the antiwar sentiment in Quebec, where there's a long tradition of pacifism and support for the Afghanistan mission is the lowest in Canada. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Cheers then tears for Canucks

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240566  
**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 30  
**ILLUSTRATION:** 2 photos 1. photo of CHRISTIAN DUCHESNE 2. photo of MARIO MERCIER  
**BYLINE:** MARTIN OUELLET, CP  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, Afghanistan  
**WORD COUNT:** 281

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"There is no training to prepare us to get through that," said Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand.

"But the two soldiers died doing the work they love."

On Wednesday, the body of Pte. Simon Longtin returned to Canada.

Longtin, also based in Quebec, was killed in Afghanistan on Sunday.

Several times strategic spots have fallen into Taliban hands, only to be retaken by Canadian troops.

The situation has improved greatly compared to a year ago, Gauthier said.

"Last year in the district of Zhari and Panjwahi, it was total war," Gauthier said.

"There were no more civilians in there, all you saw was what you saw in World War II, where artillery would fire, the tanks would roll and clear the region."

The area is also a popular route for armed bands of drug traffickers who have their own interest in undermining law and order.

"There is a group of terrorists involved in drug trafficking who aren't only attacking (NATO) forces, but also Afghan security forces and civilians," Gauthier said. KEYWORDS=CANADA

# Casualties put more pressure on Harper

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240565  
**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 30  
**BYLINE:** KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**WORD COUNT:** 212

---

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"Mr. Duceppe and Mr. Dion seem to be debating the different ways to have the mission continue to 2009, then end it at that time. But if it's the wrong mission in 2009, it's the wrong mission now," he told Sun Media.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said he won't "make threats" like Duceppe.

"The fundamental point is that Canada must be clear on its engagements, on its involvement," he said.  
KEYWORDS=CANADA

# Highway 401 renamed?

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**SOURCETAG** 0708231702  
**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.23  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 29  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** PICTON, Ont.  
**WORD COUNT:** 100

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Ontario's premier says he'll consider a call to rename Canada's busiest highway in honour of the country's soldiers.

Dalton McGuinty says he'll listen to recommendations that Highway 401 be renamed the Highway of Heroes.

The highway's overpasses have become the scene of impromptu gatherings in recent months, as people wave flags while motorcades pass by bearing the remains of soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

The flag-draped coffin of the latest soldier to be killed in the wartorn country, Pte. Simon Longtin, was returned to CFB Trenton yesterday and was to be transported to Toronto for autopsy.

McGuinty was previously involved in changing the name of an Ottawa highway to Veterans Memorial Highway.

He says the province needs to look for opportunities to lend support to Canada's soldiers and thank them for their sacrifices.

# Tribute to slain fighters housands pay respects to soldiers killed in deadly battle with Taliban

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**SOURCETAG:** 0708240797

**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 24

**ILLUSTRATION:** 2 photos 1. photo by Martin Ouellete Soldiers carry the coffin of Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne during a ramp ceremony at Kandahar Airfield yesterday. About one thousand soldiers from several nations paid tribute to the latest Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Duchesne, 34, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, died Wednesday. 2. photo by CP Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier talks about Wednesday's deadly explosion that ripped into a Canadian armoured vehicle.

**BYLINE:** CP

**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR

**WORD COUNT:** 220

---

About 1,000 soldiers from several nations have paid tribute to the latest Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

A brief but emotional ramp ceremony was held at dawn yesterday at Kandahar airfield for Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Field Ambulance unit and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the Royal 22nd Regiment, both based in Valcartier, Que.

Their caskets were loaded onto a Hercules transport aircraft for the long flight back to Canada.

During the ceremony which began at 5:30 a.m. local time and lasted about 30 minutes, both were remembered for their commitment to making the world a better place.

The deaths of the two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV cameraman destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the fresh troops won an all-day battle with the Taliban for a dusty Afghan hill.

Canadian battlegroup commander Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier said the mission called Operation Eagle Eye was still a success, despite the deaths.

"We obtained our objectives, we secured a corridor to link up with Afghan authorities and push reconstruction projects," Gauthier said.

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was in the back of the armoured vehicle, preparing a report on the 13-hour battle, when the bomb exploded and seriously wounded his cameraman, Charles Dubois.

At least five Canadian vehicles, including a minesweeper, had passed over the track before the explosion.

"There is no training to prepare us to get through that," said Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand.



"But the two soldiers died doing the work they love."

The casualties were all taken by U.S. helicopter to the main base at Kandahar Airfield.

The hill sits in the Zhari district, about 50 km west of Kandahar.

Zhari and Panjwahi district, just to the south, are Taliban hotbeds that have seen many battles between Canadian troops and insurgents. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Survivor calls blast unimaginable

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240796  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 24  
**ILLUSTRATION:** 2 photos 1. photo of CHARLES DUBOIS Leg amputated 2. photo of PATRICE ROY Describes scene  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR  
**WORD COUNT:** 193

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A Radio-Canada reporter who survived a roadside bomb attack that killed two Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter said yesterday the horrific nature of the blast is hard to describe.

Patrice Roy, 44, told reporters at the Canadian base in Kandahar he was writing his report inside the moving armoured vehicle just seconds before the explosion.

"It's a huge, huge blast. It's a scene that's difficult to imagine," said the Ottawa-based reporter, adding a medic sitting next to him was one of the two soldiers who died.

"People were not panicking, but it was so serious," he said.

"... We didn't know if other mines would be there and we had to walk (through suspect ground) to get the body."

The attack happened in the Zhari district about 50 km west of Kandahar city on the first major combat operation for the Quebec-based Van Doos regiment in Afghanistan, codenamed Operation Eagle Eye.

Another Canadian soldier was wounded, along with Radio-Canada cameraman Charles Dubois, who had one of his legs amputated below the knee.

Roy says the explosion happened shortly after a minesweeper had finished clearing a track on the road so the convoy of tanks and armoured vehicles could follow.

Roy himself was treated for shock and released.

He said he will leave Afghanistan to accompany Dubois, 29, to a U.S. military hospital in Germany and will not return to the war-torn country.

"My mission was to come (to Afghanistan) with Charles and to leave with Charles," Roy said. "He needs care and I will leave with him." **KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

# Ontario highway a salute to heroes

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240795  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 24  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** TORONTO  
**WORD COUNT:** 155

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A stretch of Ontario highway that's become a sombre repatriation route for soldiers felled in Afghanistan, drawing impromptu gatherings of mourners saluting that sacrifice, is set to be renamed in their honour, the province said yesterday.

The 170-km stretch of Highway 401 between the eastern Ontario airbase where the flag-draped coffins of fallen soldiers arrive and the forensics centre in Toronto that receives them has been dubbed the Highway of Heroes.

More than 14,000 people have signed an electronic petition to officially rename that stretch of highway.

It's a place where people commonly gather on overpasses to wave flags, display placards of support, and salute the processions of hearses and limousines.

Yesterday, Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield said there were "no barriers to making this happen."

"I think when you consider the sacrifice that the soldiers and others have made, it's just a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on that sacrifice and to be able to acknowledge it," Cansfield said.

"There's no reason not to do it. All we need to do now is get into the process of how quickly we can do it."  
**KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

## 'Correctness' rules decal row

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240788  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** 15  
**BYLINE:** BILL KAUFMANN  
**WORD COUNT:** 474

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With troop decal mania sweeping Calgary and the country, right-wing political correctness has reached hysteria pitch.

It's considered bad form to even question the now infallible slogan, while valid doubts about Canada's involvement in Afghanistan are drowned out by the yellow sticker distraction.

Proponents of the war who condemn its use as a political football have been eagerly hogging the pigskin. There's even talk in Calgary that the latest Canadian casualties in Afghanistan should re-focus efforts to wrap city politicians and their vehicles in yellow adhesives.

In an election year, proclaiming fealty to the troops is a much easier sell than the tough decisions needed to manage a city's run-amok growth.

And let's be honest — the momentum for the Support the Troops push is generated overwhelmingly by those who back the war.

I'll bet dollars to Kandahar Tim Hortons donuts the crushing majority of those displaying the magnets or decals strongly favour the mission.

The war's biggest civilian proponents and many soldiers themselves will be the first to insist you can't support the troops without backing the mission, that they're inseparable. Many who don't support the deployment know this and are loathe to exhibit the stickers.

So, Mayor Dave Bronconnier was quite right at the outset of the controversy to suggest decking out city vehicles would prove divisive.

War has a way of doing that, particularly ones that clearly have nothing to do with defending the country. It's the feds' war, not city council's and if Ottawa wants to splash its vehicle fleet in patriotic hues, it can.

That would be quite enough for those of us opposed to our tax money being spent — often hugely wastefully, by the way — on the contradiction of bombing Afghans while delivering them humanitarian aid.

When city council has entertained taking an anti-nuclear or anti-war stance, they were told to stick to civic issues by, guess who — many now clamouring for yellow ribbons on garbage trucks.

One would assume every one of those Calgarians outraged by city council's rejection vote last month would be voluntarily donning the decals in triplicate. I haven't seen nearly that many of them.

I turn on my radio and hear right-wing political correctness in the form of trying to strong-arm the Royal Canadian Legion into banning members of city council from their premises. The Legion refuses to do this and says this man doesn't speak for the organization.

There's more empty blather about how the troops are fighting for our freedoms, then we hear how those taking a certain stand on the issue should be bullied when they exercise those liberties.

Again, it's a predictable byproduct of war.

Preposterously proclaiming our troops' sacrifices will fend off an "Islamofascist" horde bent on eviscerating our way of life is a shamefully dishonest way to push patriotism. The last time I checked, western armies were occupying Muslim lands — and the only ones capable of curtailing freedoms at home are our own governments.

As with most sloganeering, the decal debate obscures uncomfortable realities, such as a top British general predicting NATO's Afghan mission could last nearly four decades or that the Kabul government cutthroats we're fighting for granted themselves a war crimes amnesty last winter.

Now the city's agreed to help sell the stickers, with the proceeds going to support military families.

Nobody asks why the feds won't sufficiently compensate our soldiers' families so such aid would be unnecessary. Demanding that could even be called supporting the troops.

# Harper under pressure Bloc threatens to topple government if no deadline set for Afghanistan pullout

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**SOURCETAG:** 0708240774  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 5  
**BYLINE:** KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU  
**WORD COUNT:** 349

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper is under mounting pressure to table a firm plan to withdraw Canadian troops from the war in Afghanistan after the deaths of three Quebec-based soldiers.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe warned yesterday he would vote against a Conservative throne speech and try to topple the minority Conservative government if it doesn't promise an exit date for combat troops.

"Stephen Harper needs to be very clear that the military presence of troops in Kandahar ends in February 2009," Duceppe said.

"It is a minimal requirement. Canada has done its part. It's time other countries relieved it."

Speaking one day after a roadside blast killed two Van Doo soldiers and an interpreter and injured two journalists, Duceppe said he would not "exploit the emotions" of Quebecers by calling for an immediate pullout.

But he insisted Canada must advise NATO allies now so other countries can prepare to replace Canadian troops.

NDP Leader Jack Layton said it makes no sense to carry on a flawed mission for 18 more months.

"Mr. Duceppe and Mr. Dion seem to be debating the different ways to have the mission continue to 2009 then end it at that time. But if it's the wrong mission in 2009, it's the wrong mission now and I would urge them to reconsider their support for Mr. Harper's two-year extension," he told Sun Media.

Layton said he will continue to press for an immediate withdrawal when Parliament resumes in the fall.

Harper has said he would not extend the military mission without consensus in Parliament, but has not said when the issue would be debated.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said he won't "make threats" like Duceppe, but also demanded Harper notify NATO of Canada's planned departure.

"I don't want to play politics on the backs of victims. The fundamental point is that Canada must be clear on its engagements, on its involvement," he said.

"Canada has done its share in the combat operations. We would like the prime minister to be clear with our allies instead of entertaining this ambiguity."

Dion said the Liberals might support Canadian troops remaining past 2009, working on training, development and humanitarian initiatives instead of combat.

NDP MP Dawn Black accused the Liberals and BQ of trying to "keep one foot on both sides" of what is a "search and kill. Too many civilians are dying, we're not making the kind of difference in the lives Canadians would wish us to and too many Canadians have been injured and killed along the way in a mission that was never well thought out or stood a great chance of success," she said. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Military heads show support for mission

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**SOURCETAG** 0708240773

**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 5

**ILLUSTRATION:** 3 photos photo by Jacques Boissinot The Canadian flag flies at half-staff yesterday at CFB Valcartier, Que. Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne were killed Wednesday. 2 photos by CP 1. CHRISTIAN DUCHESNE 2. MARIO MERCIER

**BYLINE:** CP

**DATELINE:** MONTREAL

**WORD COUNT:** 267

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Military leaders in Quebec stood firmly behind Canada's controversial mission in Afghanistan, as soldiers at the dead soldiers' home base paid homage to their fallen colleagues yesterday.

Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, died in a roadside bombing Wednesday, the same day the body of Quebecer Pte. Simon Longtin was brought back to Canada.

But as Canada's politicians jockeyed for position on the contentious debate, soldiers at Canadian Forces Bases Valcartier closed ranks in honour of their comrades.

"The men and women in Afghanistan right now want to complete the mission they were given, they want to make a difference," Lt.-Col. Hercule Gosselin said at the base near Quebec City.

"They understand why we're in Afghanistan. Their families also understand and that's why they support us."

Commander Patrice Carriere admitted it was difficult standing on Duchesne's doorstep as he prepared to tell his wife, a mother of three young girls, her husband had been killed.

"You take a deep breath, count to three and then you go," he said.

"You have to go and there is just no easy way of doing it."

The deaths represent the first fatalities for the newly deployed soldiers from CFB Valcartier, home to several regiments, including the Royal 22nd Regiment known also as the Van Doos.

The deaths will test the antiwar sentiment in Quebec, where there's a long tradition of pacifism, and support for the Afghanistan mission is the lowest in Canada.

Most pundits were predicting Canada's involvement in Afghanistan will dominate Quebec's political scene in coming months.

"It is playing itself out to some considerable degree as a policy question," said pollster Bruce Anderson, head of Decima Research.



Anderson said it is difficult to pinpoint the causes behind Quebec's historic opposition to military intervention.

Yet he suggested recent ambivalence may be due to parallels the Afghan mission conjures to U.S. foreign policy.

"If we look at perceptions of Bush administration foreign policy, opinions have soured more quickly and more profoundly in Quebec than elsewhere," Anderson said.

"I believe that is one of the conditions precedent for the deterioration of support for the mission in Afghanistan." KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Grief, anger grip Quebec after latest combat deaths

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240012

**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A4

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Cpl. Martin Long, DND, CanWest News Service / MasterCpl. Christian Duchesne (pictured) and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier were killed Wednesday when the armoured vehicle they were travelling in struck a suspected mine. ; Photo: Cpl. Martin Long, DND, CanWest News Service / Master Warrant ;

**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda and Nicole Baer

**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service

**WORD COUNT:** 710

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As Quebec prepares to receive the bodies of two more soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Canada faces growing emotional and political turmoil about the military mission to the war-torn country.

Disbelief, sorrow and pain were obvious at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, Que., yesterday as soldiers tried to come to terms with the deaths of two more comrades.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Ambulance Company, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (known in English Canada as the Van Doos), were killed Wednesday when their light armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb. Another soldier and a Radio-Canada cameraman were also injured in the incident at Gundy Ghar in the Panjwaii district of southern Afghanistan.

On the same day, the flag-draped coffin of Pte. Simon Longtin, killed Sunday, returned to Canada.

Yesterday, Peter Walsh, a personal friend of Duchesne's, drove from Petawawa, Ont., to pay his respects and lay flowers at the entrance gate of Valcartier, just outside Quebec City.

"I am sad and deeply touched," said Walsh, who just returned from Afghanistan two weeks ago. Wiping tears from his cheeks, Walsh praised the soldiers' accomplishments.

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Walsh said, his voice shaky with grief.

The Van Doo regiment took command of the mission only at the beginning of the month. Already, though, pictures of the fallen soldiers are having an impact in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest in Canada. Indeed, a CROP poll this week found that opposition to sending Quebec troops to Afghanistan increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent in the province after Longtin's death.

The shift in public opinion has also galvanized politicians, with Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe insisting yesterday that the Harper government commit clearly in a speech from the throne to the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Duceppe went so far as to say that committing to a withdrawal is a "minimal requirement" to earn the Bloc's support of a throne speech, which, in turn, is essential for the survival of the government itself. Indeed, he suggested he is ready to bring down the government over the issue, so it can be debated in an election. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has already announced he will not extend the military mission without the consent of Parliament. In light of his minority, he requires the support of at least one opposition party.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion, who has the most opposition votes to deliver on any issue, has said he wants the government to immediately advise its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role in 2009.

"We need to give them the time for the replacement," Dion reiterated yesterday, adding the announcement cannot be put off until a throne speech, which some expect in October. "It should be said now."

The latest casualties in Afghanistan bring the Canadian death toll to 70, including one diplomat, since the mission began in 2002.

"It was a huge, huge blast," recalled Patrice Roy, a Radio-Canada reporter who was present but uninjured in Wednesday's blast. "It's difficult to describe ... it's difficult to imagine."

Roy, the broadcaster's Ottawa bureau chief, talked of the tragedy in a Kandahar news conference. "We were at the end of a very difficult mission," he said. "They told us, 'The Taliban won't shoot because we're so many tanks. It's a demonstration of force, so they will run.'"

But, he added: "They didn't run. They were there, they attacked the convoy, they attacked the first soldiers that were there."

"It's a scene that's difficult to imagine. People were not panicking, but it was so serious. And we didn't know if other mines would be there. So you had to walk to get the bodies," Roy said.

His cameraman, Charles Dubois, was in stable condition yesterday after the amputation of a leg below the knee. He was to be evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

Dubois' injury sparked comment on the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on TV talk shows were already questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of fire.

Surprisingly, however, the mood at the Canadian Forces recruiting centre in downtown Montreal was upbeat.

Young men, apparently unconcerned about the latest carnage in far-away Kandahar province, came in looking for information on how to sign up for military service.

"It doesn't make me afraid," said Christian Gallant, 35. "If anything, it motivates me even more."

Canada has about 2,500 troops in Afghanistan.

# Stretched Forces issue call for ex–personnel; Senior non–commissioned officers in high demand as mission in Afghanistan strains army's resources

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240009  
**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A3  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 523

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OTTAWA — The Canadian Forces has sent a request to experienced ex–military personnel to rejoin the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent at the end of March by Lt.–Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non–commissioned officers, captains and majors saying their services are needed to shore up the army.

The general points out the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, the general says there is a high demand for experienced personnel. "We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," writes Natynczyk, the vice–chief of the defence staff.

A retired officer who received one of the letters said he was told the Afghanistan war is overstretching the army and that experienced personnel are desperately required both to train new recruits at home and to fill ranks left vacant because of the number of soldiers who are in Afghanistan. The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan mission are from the army.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same amount training back in Canada ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non–commissioned officers are in particularly high demand for international missions because of their experience. But in a Catch–22, the army also needs them to train new recruits at home. Canada's regular army is around 21,300 strong with 23,900 reservists, military officials said yesterday.

In a posting on the Defence Department's website, the military points out that retired officers are needed for jobs in the infantry, armour, artillery, intelligence and electrical and mechanical engineering areas, among others. For non–commissioned members, the army is seeking artillerymen, weapons technicians, combat engineers, infantry and other occupations.

Natynczyk writes instructors are required for training, full-time support at reserve units and staff within national or international headquarters.

Military spokesman Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky said yesterday the letter was sent to about 2,000 former captains, majors and senior NCOs. About 200 have indicated an interest in rejoining, he added.

The letter was also later posted on a Forces website. "By recruiting people who have previous CF experience, this allows us obviously to use them immediately in supervisory roles or specialist roles," Babinsky said.

Natynczyk states in his letter that the military is open to welcoming back personnel in the regular forces, the reserves or as civilians.

The Canadian Forces is primarily looking for a full-time commitment, the general writes, but "we are also willing to be flexible in the amount of time you commit." He wanted to hear from retired personnel by June 15 but added that applications would also be taken after that date.

In the past, military officials have said the Canadian Forces is exceeding its targets for new recruits, but there is a growing concern the Forces will face an exodus of experienced personnel as many retire over the next decade.

# Stretch of 401 renamed Highway of Heroes

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240022  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Canada/World  
**PAGE:** A6  
**DATELINE:** TORONTO  
**SOURCE:** The Canadian Press  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 124

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A stretch of Ontario highway that's become a sombre repatriation route for soldiers felled in Afghanistan, drawing impromptu gatherings of mourners saluting that sacrifice, is set to be renamed in their honour, the province said yesterday.

The 170-kilometre stretch of Highway 401 between the eastern Ontario airbase where the flag-draped coffins of fallen soldiers arrive and the forensics centre in Toronto that receives them has been dubbed the Highway of Heroes.

More than 14,000 people have signed an electronic petition to officially rename that stretch of highway, where people gather on overpasses to wave flags, display placards of support, and salute the processions of hearses and limousines.

Yesterday, Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield said there were "no barriers to making this happen."

# Government corruption aids drug trade in Afghanistan

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<b>IDNUMBER</b>	200708240021
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	The Hamilton Spectator
<b>DATE:</b>	2007.08.24
<b>EDITION:</b>	Final
<b>SECTION:</b>	Canada/World
<b>PAGE:</b>	A6
<b>ILLUSTRATION:</b>	Photo: Farzana Wahidy, the Associated Press / Afghanofficials watch opium products burning on the outskirts of Kabul earlier this summer. ;
<b>SOURCE:</b>	Spectator wire services
<b>COPYRIGHT:</b>	© 2007 Torstar Corporation
<b>WORD COUNT:</b>	714

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Poppies were the first thing that British army Captain Leo Docherty noticed when he arrived in Afghanistan's turbulent Helmand province in April 2006.

"They were growing right outside the gate of our Forward Operating Base," he said. Within two weeks of his deployment to the remote town of Sangin, he realized that "poppy is the economic mainstay and everyone is involved right up to the higher echelons of the local government."

Poppy, of course, is the plant from which opium and heroin are derived.

Docherty was quick to realize that the military push into northern Helmand province was going to run into serious trouble.

The rumour was "that we were there to eradicate the poppy," he said. "The Taliban aren't stupid and so they said, 'These guys are here to destroy your livelihood, so let's take up arms against them.' And it's been a downward spiral since then."

In fact, despite the presence of 35,000 NATO troops in Afghanistan, the drug trade is going gangbusters.

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Afghan opium production in 2006 rose a staggering 57 per cent over the previous year. Next month, the United Nations is expected to release a report showing an additional 15 per cent jump in opium production this year while highlighting the sobering fact that Afghanistan now accounts for 95 per cent of the world's poppy crop.

The exploding drug trade is both a symptom and a source of instability and corruption. It is not just a case of evil drug traffickers taking advantage of a good but ineffective government to facilitate terrorism and insurgency – as frequently portrayed. The traffickers and their agents are all too often corrupt government officials themselves, who forge alliances of convenience with insurgent groups, including the Taliban, to protect their businesses and distribution routes.

But the success of the illegal narcotics industry isn't confined to Afghanistan. Business is booming in South America, the Middle East, Africa and across the United States.

Thirty-six years and hundreds of billions of dollars after President Richard M. Nixon launched the war on

drugs, consumers worldwide are taking more narcotics and criminals are making fatter profits than ever before. The syndicates that control narcotics production and distribution reap the profits from an annual turnover of \$400 billion to \$500 billion. And terrorist organizations such as the Taliban are using this money to expand their operations and buy ever more sophisticated weapons, threatening Western security.

The collapse of communism and the rise of globalization in the late 1980s and early '90s gave transnational criminality a tremendous boost.

The expansion of world trade and financial markets has provided criminals ample opportunity to broaden their activities. But there has been no comparable increase in the ability of the Western world to police global crime.

International mobsters, unlike terrorists, don't seek to bring down the West; they just want to make a buck. But these two distinct species breed in the same swamps. In areas notorious for crime, such as the tri-border region connecting Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina, gangsters and terrorists habitually co-operate.

In May, the Senlis Council, a group that works on the opium issue in Afghanistan, argued that "current counter-narcotics policies ... have focused on poppy eradication, without providing farmers with viable alternatives."

Instead of eradication, the council, which is made up of senior politicians and law enforcement officials from Canada and Europe, concludes that Afghan farmers should be permitted to grow opium that can then be refined and distributed for medical purposes. (That's not going to happen, as the United States has recently reiterated its commitment to poppy eradication.)

Of course, it is always going to be difficult to make major inroads into drug production in Afghanistan without addressing the international demand for illicit drugs. The most realistic medium-term aim is to clean up the government so that officials linked to drugs do not undermine the spread of the rule of law and turn the country into a narco-state.

It will take many years of effective, co-ordinated government action, backed up with sustained international support, to undercut the drug trade. Ostensibly quick and superficially easy solutions are merely a distraction from the real work needed to defeat Afghanistan's drug fix.

In Washington, the war on drugs has been a third-rail issue since its inauguration. It's obvious why. Telling people that their kids can do drugs is the kiss of death at the ballot box.

But that was before 9/11. Now the drug war is undermining Western security throughout the world.



# 'The force of the explosion was massive'; Canadian reporter injured in bomb blast relives horrifying attack

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240020  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Canada/World  
**PAGE:** A6  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Martin Ouellet, the Canadian Press / Radio Canada journalist Patrice Roy, 44, describes writing his notes in the vehicle just before the blast that killed three. ;  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 1304

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Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was sitting beside Canadian Forces medic Christian Duchesne when the armoured vehicle they were riding in hit a road mine near Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Duchesne and a second soldier, Mario Mercier were killed, as well as an Afghan interpreter. Roy suffered only shock but his cameraman, Charles Dubois, was seriously wounded and had his leg amputated below the knee in a German hospital.

Roy yesterday relived the horrifying experience in an interview with a CBC radio reporter:

Roy: "We left very early in the morning with a company whose mission was to take a mountain, or retake a mountain. It was 16 kilometres between there and our departure point. We were told it would be pretty light going, that they didn't think the Taliban would be listening.

But we quickly noticed that the operation would be a lot more complicated. The Taliban started firing rockets all over the place, not directly at our vehicle because we were following behind, but at the ones ahead. So for 13 hours we drove around a village in the LAV3, we were near the mountain but couldn't go up.

And Charles Dubois, our cameraman who was injured, took some extraordinary pictures of that operation because from our vantage point we could see everything in relative security. Toward the end of the day, after 13 hours, they decided to go up to the post they were supposed to reach -- the target -- and it's while we were climbing up the last bend on the mountain that there was a flash, a massive shock in the LAV3.

When I came to, my cameraman Charles was beside me in a great deal of pain, and the others had been ejected. The vehicle, the back of the vehicle, was completely smashed. Obviously there was a first aid operation set up, etc. It was quite difficult. Then we were evacuated by helicopter to the base at Kandahar, where Charles was treated. And now we're leaving in a few hours for Germany, to the hospital there, and then to Canada.

Brooks Decillia (CBC reporter): Before you went up that hill, how would you characterize the battle? Tell me about that.

Roy: I'm not a soldier, but I think that even by military standards it was a major battle. They weren't expecting it to be that major, in the area where we were there was no expectation we would come under so much fire. The Taliban were attacking with small arms, with rockets. Anything that lasts 13 hours is quite long ... we stayed in a four square kilometre area for four or five hours to take positions where the mines could be cleared, because mines are the biggest danger. And the soldiers had de-mining equipment working ahead of us to remove the mines, but clearly the machine missed one. But it was a major engagement, it was the first significant operation for the 22nd, there had been patrols beforehand, in the last month, but this was an operation, what they called a show of force in a region that had been completely overtaken by the Taliban.

The Canadians were there a year ago, they left, and they said we should go back because manifestly it's a region ... it's difficult to imagine how all that area could have been secured even in a year because all the Canadian tanks that go there are attacked whether there's eight, one or two.

Decillia: Describe the moments leading up to the explosion and then what happened.

Roy: I was, we were arriving. Charles and I were extraordinarily tired, we hadn't slept the night before because we had travelled by night and I was writing a little stand-up because we had built the story as a visual summary of the previous 48 hours. So in those hours I was taking notes about what was happening, and at that point I was writing the conclusion and I was reading it out loud, changing a word here and there. At the moment when I leaned my head down and scratched out a word, there was a flash, a tremendous noise, it was a flash, and then we found ourselves -- I'm not even sure I lost consciousness, but anyway, what's certain is that, once again, the force of the explosion was massive. We think maybe they put two or three mines there because LAV3s are vehicles that we were told are very robust.

It was a shock. It's rare to find people who have encountered that, and people said, military people who know, like first aid people, ambulance attendants, told me you'll see, you'll have more control than you expect. For about 15 minutes you become almost insensible. I wanted to look after Charles, the soldiers. They started first aid, and all that mattered was to get out of there fast. I was quite anxious because I was thinking 'We're civilians, and the first people they'll evacuate are the soldiers, not us, not Charles.' Except that the soldiers' misfortune was lucky for us in a way, because they died on the spot and there were two injured people left, a soldier and Charles. So we were evacuated by the first American helicopter.

Decillia: I think I got it, though my French is not very good. What did you see after the explosion? I understand that (inaudible) was evacuated, but what did you see?

Roy: I saw the LAV completely cut open. I saw people below, I saw panic, obviously, people were screaming. I heard screams everywhere. I wasn't certain, because Charles was there, I wanted to ... I saw Charles, I saw Charles who had blood, and fortunately, it was only his leg. Although we can say that we were caught up in this extraordinary mishap, and even though we're conscious of the risks we run in theatre, we were relatively lucky, in my case, obviously very lucky.

Decillia : What's going through your mind?

Roy: Nothing. Nothing, we're ... I was focused on trying to get help. I was concerned they might not help us as much because we're civilians, but in the end they helped us ... afterward, in the helicopter, when we got back, I thought 'we could have stepped on another mine, we could have ...' But that was after. It was almost like we were in an altered state, I imagine it was the adrenalin, I don't know. But I have to tell you, when I saw the American helicopter arrive, it's 'phew, let's get out of here.'"

Decillia: Your family, what did you tell them if (inaudible) to them?

Roy: Well first I reassured my wife. I was afraid of rumours, you know how it is. Rumours start flying right

'The force of the explosion was massive'; Canadian reporter injured in bomb blast relives horrifying attack

and left. Some thought I was dead, others ... so it's ... and when you go to Afghanistan, even when nothing's happening, you know, you're reporting here, people are worried about you, they wonder a bit 'why did he go?'

So if in addition to that a mine explodes, it's the proof that they were right (to be worried) and the proof that it's true that it's dangerous to cover a war, and Charles and I knew it.

It was the fourth time Charles had been here.

He's an unbelievable cameraman who is strong, who knows where to go, who doesn't take risks. He was very unlucky, he was very unlucky, but ... that's it, it's a mix of 'wouldn't we be better off to stay in the camp and wait for news from the front and report it as best we can?' Should civilians ... this is not a traditional war, mines, there's nothing more treacherous in the world than a land mine.

We knew the Taliban were shooting at us, and (the military) set it up in such a way we weren't exposed in our vehicle, but nobody can do anything about a mine.

# Canada's casualties: Van Doos face opium war; A moment of celebration is shattered in a blast

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240002

**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Local

**PAGE:** A1

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Nicolas Asfour, Afp/Getty Images / The blast which killed two Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter happened in an area popular with armed bands of drug traffickers supported by the Taliban. ; Photo: Master Corporal Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Field Ambulance died in the roadside bombing. ; Photo: Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the Royal 22nd Regiment, was killed along with an interpreter. ;

**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

**SOURCE:** Hamilton Spectator wire services

**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation

**WORD COUNT:** 263

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A triumphant tactical success for Quebec-based troops lasted mere seconds before the blast that shattered any celebration and spilled Canadian and Afghan blood.

The deaths of two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV cameraman destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the fresh troops won the all-day battle for a dusty Afghan hill.

Canadian battlegroup Commander Lieutenant-Colonel Alain Gauthier said the mission, called Operation Eagle Eye, was still a success despite the deaths of Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment, Master Corporal Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance and an Afghan interpreter.

The area is a popular route for armed bands of drug traffickers who have their own interest in undermining law and order.

In the past two years, the Taliban have reinvigorated themselves by supporting and taxing the countless peasants who are dependent one way or another on the opium trade, their only reliable source of income. The Taliban recruits armed bands of insurgents who fight NATO troops to protect their interest in the drug economy, which is booming in Afghanistan.

"There is a group of terrorists involved in drug trafficking who aren't only attacking (NATO) forces, but also Afghan security forces and civilians," Gauthier said.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the weapon of choice, have become the biggest threat facing Canadian troops in recent months, as insurgents adapt their tactics. Gauthier said Canadian troops are getting better at detecting the mines and homemade bombs. He said 80 or 90 per cent of IEDs are discovered before they blow.

"A very small slice of the remaining per cent has deadly impact on us."

# Opposition talks election; Duceppe, Dion draw line in sand on Afghanistan, climate change

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240082  
**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** C1 / FRONT  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Stephane Dion; Colour Photo: Gilles Duceppe ;  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Mike De Souza  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 408

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OTTAWA – Opposition leaders delivered an ultimatum to Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Thursday, demanding he reverse course on his climate change policies and Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan or risk a fall election.

While Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe, whose party propped up the government last spring by supporting the budget, insisted Harper deliver a guarantee that Canada's troops would withdraw from their deadly mission by 2009, the federal Liberals chastised the prime minister for failing to deliver a strong climate change plan.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion urged Harper to apply solutions endorsed by all three opposition parties and accept a consensus that was growing among environmentalists, economists and business executives that the minority government's climate change plan is too weak to succeed.

"We believe that all political leaders have a moral obligation to do all that can be done on this critical challenge facing Canada and the world, and to put an end to the partisan politicking around this issue," Dion wrote in a letter to Harper. "To date, your approach falls far short of the best that Canada can do. I urge you to put consensus ahead of confrontation."

The warning came two days after Environment Minister John Baird published a report that appears to ignore requirements of a new law, introduced and supported by the opposition parties, calling on the government to honour its international commitments under the Kyoto protocol on climate change by reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by an average of six per cent below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.

## THRONE SPEECH

At a news conference, the Liberal leader said Harper should ensure that he saves the legislation, if he goes ahead with plans to shut down Parliament and start a new session with a throne speech in October. Otherwise, Dion said Harper was risking a dangerous political confrontation in the minority Parliament.

"If they (shut down Parliament), and they go to another throne speech, everybody knows, everybody, that the risk of an election is going up," Dion said.

Meantime, Duceppe raised the stakes by demanding that a withdrawal from the mission in 2009 be included in the throne speech.

But Dion said he doesn't want to wait until a possible throne speech in October to decide on the future of the Afghanistan mission.

He said the Liberals have insisted since February that Canada should immediately tell its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role when its current commitment ends early in 2009.

# Recruiters attempt to sign up veterans

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240031

**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A7

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: John Mahoney, CanWest News Service / WE WANTYOU: Major Guy Paquin is one of two commanding officers for armed forces recruiting in Quebec. At the Canadian Forces Recruitment Centre in downtown Montreal Thursday, reports of three deaths did not close the doors on potential new recruits. ;

**DATELINE:** OTTAWA

**BYLINE:** David Pugliese

**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service

**WORD COUNT:** 266

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OTTAWA – The Canadian Forces has sent a request to experienced ex–military personnel to rejoin the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the ongoing mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent at the end of March by Lt.–Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non–commissioned officers, captains and majors saying their services are needed to shore up the army.

The general points out the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, the general states there is a high demand for experienced personnel.

"We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," writes Natynczyk, the vice chief of the defence staff.

A retired officer who received one of the letters said he was told the Afghanistan war is overstretching the army,

The letter said that experienced personnel are desperately required both to train new recruits at home and to fill ranks left vacant because of the number of soldiers who are in Afghanistan., the officer said.

The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan mission are from the army, but an exact breakdown is not available.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same amount training back in Canada ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non–commissioned officers are in particularly high demand for international missions because of their experience.

But the army also needs them to train new recruits at home. Canada's regular army is around 21,300 strong with 23,900 reservists, military officials said Thursday.



# Bloc to withdraw support if Afghan halt not chosen; Two more deaths raise political tension in Quebec

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240030  
**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A7  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier; Colour Photo: Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne ;  
**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda and Nicole Baer  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 589

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As Quebec prepares to receive the bodies of two more soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Canada faces growing emotional and political turmoil about the military mission.

Disbelief, sorrow and pain were obvious at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, Que., on Thursday as soldiers tried to come to terms with the deaths of two more comrades.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Ambulance Company, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (known in English Canada as the Van Doos), were killed Wednesday when their light armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb. Another soldier and a Radio-Canada cameraman were also injured in the incident at Gundy Ghar in the Panjwaii district of southern Afghanistan.

On the same day, the flag-draped coffin of Pte. Simon Longtin, killed Sunday, returned to Canada.

On Thursday, Peter Walsh, a friend of Duchesne's, drove from Petawawa to pay his respects and lay flowers at the entrance gate of Valcartier, just outside Quebec City.

"I am sad and deeply touched," said Walsh, who just returned from Afghanistan two weeks ago. Wiping tears from his cheeks, Walsh praised the soldiers' accomplishments.

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Walsh said, his voice shaky with grief.

The Royal 22nd took command of the mission at the beginning of the month. Pictures of the fallen soldiers are having an impact in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest in Canada. Indeed, a CROP poll this week found that opposition to sending Quebec troops to Afghanistan increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent in the province after Longtin's death.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe insisted Thursday that the Harper government commit clearly in a speech from the throne to the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Duceppe said committing to a withdrawal is a "minimal requirement" to earn the Bloc's support of a throne speech, which, in turn, is essential for the survival of the government. Indeed, he suggested he is ready to

bring down the government over the issue, so it can be debated in an election.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has already announced he will not extend the military mission without the consent of Parliament. In light of his minority, he requires the support of at least one opposition party.

#### DION WANTS DATE SET NOW

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, who has the most opposition votes to deliver on any issue, has said he wants the government to immediately advise its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role in 2009.

"We need to give them the time for the replacement," Dion reiterated Thursday, adding the announcement cannot be put off until a throne speech, which some expect in October.

"It should be said now."

The latest casualties in Afghanistan bring the Canadian death toll to 70, including one diplomat, since the mission began in 2002.

"It was a huge, huge blast," recalled Patrice Roy, a Radio-Canada reporter who was present but uninjured in Wednesday's blast. "They told us, 'The Taliban won't shoot because we're so many tanks. It's a demonstration of force, so they will run.'"

But, he added: "They didn't run. They were there, they attacked the convoy, they attacked the first soldiers that were there."

His cameraman, Charles Dubois, was in stable condition Thursday after the amputation of his leg below the knee. He was to be evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

However, the mood at the Canadian Forces recruiting centre in downtown Montreal was upbeat. Young men, apparently unconcerned about the latest carnage in far-away Kandahar province, came in looking for information on how to sign up for military service. "It doesn't make me afraid," said Christian Gallant, 35. "If anything, it motivates me even more."

# THE AFGHAN MISSION: ROADSIDE BOMB LEFT SCENE AKIN TO APOCALYPSE NOW How one tragedy ended in another The blast that killed two Canadians was rooted in a vicious attack on an Afghan district chief and his family

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072360263

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A1 (ILLUS)

**BYLINE:** CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD

**SECTION:** Column

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

**WORDS:** 1491

**WORD COUNT:** 1479

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CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN The operation that saw two Canadian soldiers and their interpreter killed in a mine strike Wednesday had its roots in a brazen attack last week on an Afghan district leader in front of his house.

The blast ended in a horrific scene that one survivor, Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy, yesterday described as Apocalypse Now .

It was the savage attack on Haji Kheerbin, the 48-year-old district chief of the volatile Zhari area about 30 kilometres west of Kandahar, that led to the mission.

Mr. Kheerbin was preparing for prayers with his three young children at his side here last Friday when a suicide bomber approached and blew himself up. The youngsters, two sons aged 6 and 12 and a three-year-old daughter, died with their father in the blast.

For local Afghan leaders, the attack was one of the last straws, arguably the most shocking in a series of recent attacks demonstrating that the Taliban were not only back in business in the lush Zhari-Panjwai areas that border the Arghandab River, but also that they were growing ever bolder.

The Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Kandahar provincial governor Assadullah Khalid were involved personally – the governor worked with Mr. Kheerbin and was stricken by his death – and Operation Barkheh Sterbeh (Pashto for Eagle Eye) was born.

As Mr. Khalid told The Globe and Mail this week, clearly still furious, "It is not normal that children are killed like this. Children are children, Afghan or Canadian – they're human. It is a big tragedy.

It is too difficult." Dead are Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment and Master Corporal Christian Duchesne of 5th Field Ambulance, both men described as much beloved by their fellows, and the unidentified Afghan "terp," as army translators here are called.

Another unidentified member of the Vandoos, as the Royal 22nd are known, and Mr. Roy's cameraman, Charles Dubois, were also injured.

Mr. Dubois lost his right leg below the knee. Though only 30, he is a veteran and much-admired journalist, and was in Afghanistan for the fourth time.

The injured soldier and Mr. Dubois, accompanied by Mr. Roy, were to be flown to the U.S. military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, where Mr. Dubois may face a second surgery.

The objective of the joint Afghan–Canadian mission was to retake Gundy Ghar, a large hill about 15 kilometres west of Canadian bases at Masum Ghar and Patrol Base Wilson. As recently as this spring, Gundy Ghar was the site of a small Canadian strongpoint, or reinforced position, but had fallen once again into Taliban hands.

Canadian Forces traditionally have been stretched thin as they take pieces of ground along the Arghandab, then either hand them over to the ANA or ANP or attempt to hang onto them until the local forces, both still rapidly growing and becoming professional, can muster up sufficient numbers to hold them.

The hill at Gundy Ghar offers long views over the green and fertile valley and is strategically important.

Under Op Barkheh Sterbeh, the battle group, led by the soldiers of the 3rd Battalion of the Royal 22nd with tanks and the big guns of the artillery in support, and Afghan forces headed to the area three nights ago.

Mr. Roy, a 44-year-old journalist based in Ottawa, and Mr. Dubois were travelling with the soldiers as embedded journalists.

"It was supposed to be not easy, there's nothing easy in Afghanistan," Mr. Roy said. "We're not naive. But they [Canadian army officials] told us the Taliban won't shoot because we are so many . . . it is a demonstration of force, so they'll run.

"They didn't run," he said. "They were there, they attacked the convoy and they attacked the first soldiers who were there." The crew from CBC's French-language service were in the second echelon, travelling in a light armoured vehicle or LAV.

After almost 13 hours – spent circling the mud-walled compounds in the area, and engaging the Taliban, who attacked with rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and small arms – the battle proper was over and won by the Afghans and Canadians, and they prepared to go to the top of the hill itself.

Leading the way, army officials confirmed, was a tank equipped with a front-end snowplow-like attachment, a so-called "mine roller," designed to clear the road of mines and improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. The idea was that the tanks would clear a safe path, and the rest of the convoy would follow it, each vehicle attempting to navigate, as dusk fell, in the very tracks of the one before it.

"That's exactly what we did," Mr. Roy said.

He was writing his "stand-up," the script he would read off the top of his story, when there was "a huge, huge blast;" the LAV, perhaps in the dark either backing up a little or somehow veering off the cleared path by mere centimetres, struck a mine buried in the earth.

The blast struck the right rear end of the vehicle, and of the six men sitting inside the passenger compartment, only Mr. Roy emerged physically unscathed – he had merely a red scrape on his forehead from being thrown back in the explosion – if emotionally shaken.

THE AFGHAN MISSION: ROADSIDE BOMB LEFT SCENE AKIN TO APOCALYPSE NOW How the tragedy

An operation conceived in one tragedy had ended in another, and that in itself is a very Afghan story.

But it was also an illustration of why security is so critical in southern Afghanistan – without it, government leaders and politicians, teachers and doctors and the workers of foreign aid organizations – all of them keen to help this country rebuild – not only can't function, but are also sometimes in grave danger.

It was a civilian, Dave Puskas, an orthopedic spinal surgeon from Thunder Bay, Ont., just finishing up two months at the base hospital at Kandahar Air Field, who put it better than anyone else.

"To suggest that being in a combat is a failure of this mission is so wrong," he said yesterday, just hours before he boarded a plane for home. "Security is the pillar on which everything else depends. Chaos and anarchy never built anything." Dr. Puskas is a healer. He has no axe to grind.

But he has been here, fixing the broken bodies of Afghan civilians, Afghan fighters and Canadian soldiers. He has mentored Afghan doctors over at Camp Hero, the ANA camp just a couple of kilometres off the airfield that consists, for the most part, of buildings that would be condemned as unfit in almost any Western democracy.

Once, Dr. Puskas arrived at Camp Hero to give a lecture and found no one there, and for just a few minutes, he said, he wondered to himself, "Well, if they don't care enough to show up, maybe I shouldn't care.

"But the reason they were delayed," he told The Globe yesterday, "is that one of the doctors and his brother had been murdered on their way to my lecture. They [the Taliban] are targeting doctors; it's an old strategy. The Khmer Rouge [in Cambodia] did it too.

"But they still came," Dr. Puskas said.

"Are Afghans worthy? Yes they are." In the line of fire About 7% of all Quebec-based troops are in Afghanistan.

At least 52% of Canadian Forces units in that country are Quebec-based.

Soldiers from Quebec are strongly represented in the military, with fully one fifth of the troops drawn from La Belle Province.

Percentage of military personnel\* by province or territory. Nfld. and Labrador 1.4% PEI 0.3% Nova Scotia 11.8% New Brunswick 6.4% Quebec 20.3% Ontario 33.6% Manitoba 4.4% Saskatchewan 1.3% Alberta 10.2% British Columbia 8.3% Yukon Territory N/A Northwest Territories 0.2% Nunavut N/A Outside Canada 1.8% \*Data does not distinguish between part-time and full-time employees.

Civilian employees are excluded.

Reservists are included.

**SOURCE:** STATISTICS CANADA Under attack Comments from interviews with Radio-Canada correspondent Patrice Roy about Wednesday's attack on a Canadian convoy in Afghanistan: \* "After 13 hours we got to the mountain. We thought the worst was behind us." \* "It was about 6:12 and the light faded fast. I wanted to write: 'Thirteen hours later, Operation Bravo of the 22nd is successful. | They took the mountain. . .' As I wrote 'operation,' there was a gigantic flash. That took a second. I woke up maybe eight seconds later." \* "There was a flash, a huge shock in the LAV III. When I woke up, Charles was next to me in pain and the others had been ejected from the vehicle. | \* "I saw the LAV totally ripped open. I saw people underneath. | I saw panic.

People screamed. You could hear screams everywhere." To view a video of Mr. Roy's comments on the attack, visit [globeandmail.com](http://globeandmail.com) Staff [cblatchford@globeandmail.com](mailto:cblatchford@globeandmail.com) |ADDED SEARCH TERMS: |GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan |SUBJECT TERM:strife; bombs; war deaths; defence; terrorism; journalists; provinces; statistics; table |PERSONAL NAME: Patrice Roy; Haji Kheerbin; Mario Mercier; Christian Duchesne; Charles Dubois |ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

# THE AFGHAN MISSION: NEWS COVERAGE Media will still send journalists to Kandahar

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072360262

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A12

**BYLINE:** DAVID GEORGE-COSH

**SECTION:** National News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:**

**WORDS:** 476

**WORD COUNT:** 444

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**DAVID GEORGE-COSH** The injuries of a Radio-Canada cameraman hurt by a roadside bomb that also killed two Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan Wednesday has made Canadian media outlets re-evaluate the safety of their journalists in the war-torn country, but so far, the incident will not stop them from covering the war.

News directors at Global National, CTV News, CBC News, Canwest News Service, the Toronto Star, Canadian Press and The Globe and Mail have all stated they will all continue to send journalists to Kandahar to cover the war and allow them to be embedded with Canadian Forces while on patrol.

"We're pretty conscious about sending people out into these areas.

Everybody who goes gets . . . hostile environment training. But you can only do so much preparation; some things are just unforeseen," said CBC director of newsgathering, Jamie Purdon.

Mr. Purdon said although the close-knit newsroom has experienced a range of emotions about the incident that severely injured cameraman Charles Dubois and shook up correspondent Patrice Roy, CBC journalists who have reported from Afghanistan in the past were fully aware that an attack involving journalists alongside soldiers was inevitable.

Regardless of the risks, Mr. Purdon said the CBC will continue to bring stories from Afghanistan to Canadians.

Canadian Press editor-in-chief Scott White said about 15 reporters have travelled to Afghanistan, but do so on a voluntary basis and must undergo rigorous training before flying out to Kandahar.

"It's a terrifying situation and you have real sympathy for what the military families go through," Mr. White said.

He said if the Department of National Defence foresees a major security risk "outside the wire," CP advises reporters to stay within the confines of the base, but coverage continues.

Colin MacKenzie, The Globe's managing editor of news, said the incident reminds journalists that covering this sort of mission is not risk-free.

"Naturally, it has us thinking again if it's worth it, and for the moment, it's a thing that's worth doing. When you're embedded, you share some of the same risks – not nearly as many," Mr. MacKenzie said.

Department of National Defence spokesman Captain Adam Thomson said no decisions have been made within the Canadian Forces to reconsider embedding reporters with soldiers.

"When we speak to the media initially, when they put a request to embed, we highlight the risks they will face there. They are going to be operating in a combat environment and they know that . . . they accept that risk and challenge to report the news," Capt.

Thomson said.

Radio–Canada spokesman Marc Pichette said in a press conference that journalists will continue to be rotated through Afghanistan, including anchorman Bernard Derome, who left yesterday to replace Mr. Roy. Mr. Roy, who was to have stayed on in Afghanistan until Sept. 9, is scheduled to return immediately.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; bombs; journalists

ORGANIZATION NAME: ROB 1000; Canadian Broadcasting Corp.; Radio–Canada



# THE AFGHAN MISSION: THE VICTIMS: VETERANS DIED SEATED ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER At home, a knock on the door and six fatherless children

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072360261

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A1

**BYLINE:** INGRID PERITZ AND TU THANH HA

**SECTION:** National News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:**

**WORDS:** 611

**WORD COUNT:** 469

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INGRID PERITZ AND TU THANH HA When Christian Duchesne's wife saw the three military men at the door, she made sure to usher away her three young daughters into the care of a neighbour.

As an army spouse, she knew what their visit meant.

When she sat down, her worst fears were right. Another spouse became a widow in Canada yesterday, and more children lost their father.

"She was very stoic. She took the news as well as one can in such circumstances," recalled Navy Captain Patrice Carriere, who broke the news.

Master Corporal Duchesne, a medic, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, an infantryman, this week became the 68th and 69th Canadian soldiers to lose their lives in Afghanistan.

Between them, the veteran soldiers from Quebec's Valcartier base left six children fatherless.

"That's the sad thing – when there are children. Because, how do you tell the children?" said Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian Lillie, one of the three men who met MCpl. Duchesne's wife.

The news hit soldiers at CFB Valcartier while they were still paying respects to a fallen comrade, Private Simon Longtin, who died Sunday.

With the latest casualties, the base lost three soldiers in four days. Flowers left in tribute for Pte. Longtin at the gates of the base hadn't wilted yet.

MCpl. Duchesne, 34, and MWO Mercier, 43, were Quebecers who had dedicated their lives to the Canadian military, two seasoned soldiers with 43 years of service between them.

Both had served two tours of duty in the former Yugoslavia, and MWO Mercier had also been deployed in Haiti.

They died seated across from one another in the light armoured vehicle that blew up on a mine Wednesday.

THE AFGHAN MISSION: THE VICTIMS: VETERANS DIED SEATED ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER At home

An Afghan interpreter sitting next to MWO Mercier also died. Radio-Canada cameraman Charles Dubois, who was on MCpl. Duchesne's left, had a leg amputated.

MCpl. Duchesne started his career in the artillery, then became a medic who tended to comrades at the front lines and back at army base.

MWO Mercier, a veteran of 19 years with the Royal 22nd Regiment, was expected to retire after this rotation in Afghanistan.

"It was for him the crowning of a career," said Lieutenant-Colonel Hercule Gosselin, Valcartier's interim commander.

MWO Mercier was a square-jawed fitness buff who would run the 12 kilometres to Valcartier base from his home outside Quebec City.

To fellow soldiers, he was known for a can-do spirit that got the members of his battalion through the toughest situations.

"He was an unbelievable NCO. . . . It's the way he managed to rally people around him in circumstances that were sometimes very difficult," Col. Gosselin said.

MWO Mercier showed the same gung-ho approach to life at home.

Around his neighbourhood, home to many military families, neighbours often saw him with his three teenaged children, driving them to their sporting activities. His wife is also in the armed forces.

MCpl. Duchesne's daughters are three, five and nine years old.

As what the military calls a role 1 medtech, his job was to look after the wounded at the front lines. He was with 5th Field Ambulance, Valcartier's medical detachment.

"He was a quiet gentleman, a quiet man, and he was well liked," PO2 Lillie said. "[Meeting his widow] was the hardest thing I ever did in the military." PO2 Lillie yesterday had another grim task, preparing eight members of the field ambulance to be pallbearers for MCpl. Duchesne when his casket lands back in Canada.

Meanwhile yesterday, outside the base, an acquaintance of MWO Mercier left a bouquet with a card tucked inside.

"Mario, you were a real warrior," it said.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; war deaths; bombs; biography

PERSONAL NAME: Christian Duchesne; Mario Mercier; Simon Longtin

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

THE AFGHAN MISSION: THE VICTIMS: VETERANS DIED SEATED ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER At ho

# THE AFGHAN MISSION: FEDERAL POLITICS: DUCEPPE ON THE WARPATH IN WAKE OF QUEBEC SOLDIERS' DEATHS PM must commit to 2009 withdrawal, Bloc says Opposition threatens to bring down government if anticipated fall Throne Speech does not include an end date for the mission

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072360240

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A12

**BYLINE:** DANIEL LEBLANC AND BILL CURRY

**SECTION:** National News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** OTTAWA, KUUIJUAQ, QUE.

**WORDS:** 540

**WORD COUNT:** 487

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DANIEL LEBLANC AND BILL CURRY OTTAWA, KUUIJUAQ, QUE.

Opposition leaders yesterday, following a deadly week in Afghanistan, threatened the minority Harper government with defeat unless it commits to withdrawal from Kandahar in 2009.

The Bloc Quebecois ended a caucus meeting on the political warpath, one day after two Quebec-based soldiers and an Afghan interpreter died in the latest roadside bombing.

The Bloc has kept the government alive during the last two budgets, and its support could prove crucial if Prime Minister Stephen Harper starts the fall sitting of the House with a much-rumoured Speech from the Throne and a confidence vote.

Going on the offensive after a tough spring for the Bloc, leader Gilles Duceppe said he will support an eventual Speech from the Throne this fall only if it includes an end date for the current combat mission.

"It's clear that the military effort has been made and must cease in February, 2009," Mr. Duceppe said after a Bloc caucus in Saint-Hyacinthe, the site of one of three by-elections going on in Quebec.

"If Mr. Harper wants to stay beyond February, 2009, we will have that debate during an election campaign." However, Quebec Premier Jean Charest played down public opinion polls showing his province is strongly opposed to the mission.

He insisted Quebecers do support the troops and encouraged them to express that support.

"I think we have to be careful in the way we measure public opinion about these events," he told reporters yesterday in Kuujuaq, where he was taking part in a conference on Inuit self-government.

"It's a terrible tragedy for the families," Mr. Charest said.

THE AFGHAN MISSION: FEDERAL POLITICS: DUCPEPE ON THE WARPATH IN WAKE OF QUEBEC SOLDIERS' DEATHS

"These are generally very young lives that we lose and they're making the most important sacrifice a human being can make in the name of democracy and to fight for peace." Yesterday afternoon, Liberal Leader Stephane Dion made it clear that he wants the government to immediately announce the withdrawal of Canadian troops from the combat mission in Kandahar in 2009.

"If the government presents a Speech from the Throne that goes against the interests of Canadians, be it on military matters or climate change or other key issues, it would be very difficult for us to stand up in the House and support that," said Mr. Dion, who called a news conference yesterday to push the Harper government to enact tougher regulations to deal with greenhouse gases.

While the opposition parties attacked the government on Afghanistan, they treaded carefully. Pollsters believe that while a large majority of Quebecers oppose the military mission in Afghanistan, there remains a strong level of support in the province for the individual soldiers.

Mr. Duceppe said he continues to support the troops and did not call for an immediate pullout from Kandahar. Still, he said Canada's role in Afghanistan must focus on humanitarian work in the future.

The Harper government has said the Canadian Forces will only remain in Afghanistan with the support of the House of Commons, but has not laid out its plans for the post-2009 mission.

NDP Leader Jack Layton is alone among opposition leaders to call for an immediate exit from Afghanistan. In an interview, he showed little interest in propping up the government this fall.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: defence; foreign policy; strife; political

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Bloc Quebecois

# REPATRIATION OF FALLEN SOLDIERS Portion of 401 to become 'Highway of Heroes'

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072360186

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A6 (ILLUS)

**BYLINE:** MELISSA JUERGENSEN

**SECTION:** National News

**SOURCE:** CP

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** Toronto ONT

**WORDS:** 537

**WORD COUNT:** 509

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MELISSA JUERGENSEN Canadian Press TORONTO A stretch of Ontario highway that's become a sombre repatriation route for soldiers killed in Afghanistan, drawing impromptu gatherings of mourners saluting that sacrifice, is set to be renamed in their honour, the province said yesterday.

The 170-kilometre section of Highway 401 between CFB Trenton where the flag-draped coffins of fallen soldiers arrive and the forensics centre in Toronto that receives them has been dubbed the Highway of Heroes.

More than 14,000 people have signed an online petition to officially rename the stretch of highway where people gather on overpasses to wave flags, display placards of support and salute the processions of hearses and limousines.

Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield said there were "no barriers to making this happen." "I think when you consider the sacrifice that the soldiers and others have made, it's just a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on that sacrifice and to be able to acknowledge it," Ms. Cansfield said in a phone interview, adding that she became aware of the online petition on Wednesday.

"There's no reason not to do it. All we need to do now is get into the process of how quickly we can do it." The government says it's considering several options in terms of dedicating a portion of the country's busiest highway, currently named the MacDonald-Cartier Freeway.

"We don't know whether we rename one little part of it or if we leave the name and have that part of it dedicated," said Jamie Rilett, Ms. Cansfield's spokesman. "We're kind of early in the process to know which direction it's going to go, but there'll definitely be something dedicating that part of the highway to the fallen soldiers." The cost to dedicate the highway with signs will be minimal, he added.

The man behind the petition, 22-year-old James Forbes of London, Ont., said he's pleased he's attracted so much attention.

Mr. Forbes, who says he one day plans to enlist in the military, said he's received a lot of feedback from military families who've travelled along Highway 401 after repatriation ceremonies at CFB Trenton.

"It seriously means absolutely everything to them," he said of the public displays of support. "It just shows the families that the country feels for their loss." Ms. Cansfield and Premier Dalton McGuinty are expected to

discuss the highway dedication today. Mr. McGuinty was previously involved in changing the name of an Ottawa highway to Veterans Memorial Highway.

The flag-draped coffin of the latest soldier to be killed in Afghanistan, Private Simon Longtin, was returned to CFB Trenton on Wednesday.

The highway procession that followed inspired the same impromptu outpouring of support from the public that's become associated with repatriations as people gathered on overpasses along the route.

It's a scene likely to be repeated in the coming days following Wednesday's loss of two more soldiers.

Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Royal 22nd Regiment and Master Corporal Christian Duchesne of the 5th Field Ambulance were killed when their transport vehicle hit a roadside bomb. Their caskets will be returned to CFB Trenton in the next few days.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Ontario; Canada

SUBJECT TERM:highways; memorials; war deaths; name change

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

# United in grief

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL  
**IDN:** 072360165  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**PAGE:** A16  
**BYLINE:** DIANA DAVIS DUERKOP  
**SECTION:** Letter to the Edit  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:** Kingston, Ont.  
**WORDS:** 108  
**WORD COUNT:** 119

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Diana Davis Duerkop Kingston, Ont.

The death of two more Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan once again brought tears to my eyes and a lump to my throat. I was speechless when I looked at your front-page picture yesterday; there were no words for the sorrow on the face of a father and a brother.

But the sadness turned to anger when I read your headline Quebec Grieves As Two More Are Slain. How can you possibly suggest that all of Canada does not grieve with the families, friends and colleagues of these two soldiers? One thing that unites Canadians these days is the grief we share when our citizens die in war.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; war deaths

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

# United in grief

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL  
**IDN:** 072360157  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**PAGE:** A16  
**BYLINE:** BRIGADIER–GENERAL (RET.) WILL THOMPSON  
**SECTION:** Letter to the Edit  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:** Belleville, Ont.  
**WORDS:** 31  
**WORD COUNT:** 45

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Brigadier–General (Ret.) Will Thompson Belleville, Ont.

\* Your headline should have read Canada Grieves, as these soldiers were members of the Canadian Forces. Quebec Grieves is insulting to the rest of Canada and divisive with respect to unity.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; war deaths

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces



# United in grief

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072360156

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A16

**BYLINE:** WILLIAM EMIGH

**SECTION:** Letter to the Edit

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** Victoria BC

**WORDS:** 39

**WORD COUNT:** 60

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William Emigh Victoria \* Let not Quebec be separate in grief: We grieve together in Canada, and all of us wonder how many more of our youth will die in a country that hasn't been able to solve its troubles for centuries.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; war deaths

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

# United in grief

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL  
**IDN:** 072360155  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**PAGE:** A16  
**BYLINE:** HARRY FLEMMING  
**SECTION:** Letter to the Edit  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:** Halifax NS  
**WORDS:** 12  
**WORD COUNT:** 28

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Harry Flemming Halifax \* Is grief now to be circumscribed by provincial, ethnic and linguistic boundaries?

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; war deaths

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

# Stop the embedding

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL  
**IDN:** 072360154  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**PAGE:** A16  
**BYLINE:** ANN NEILSON  
**SECTION:** Letter to the Edit  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:** London, Ont.  
**WORDS:** 110  
**WORD COUNT:** 136

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Ann Neilson London, Ont.

Re Wounded Cameraman 'Marvellous,' Colleague Says (Aug. 23): After a recent conversation with my brother, who has now completed two tours of duty in Afghanistan, I believe it is time to stop allowing journalists to be embedded. He told me that, during a battle last year when "everything was flying all over the place," he was approached by a journalist seeking an interview. Not really happy to be distracted, my brother agreed. The first question was, "Are you scared?" The second question was, "Do you miss your family?" I will not tell you my brother's response, other than to say he told the journalist to immediately get under cover.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; bombs; journalists

# PM gets Afghanistan ultimatum Opposition threatens to force election

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**PUBLICATION:** WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A6

**SECTION:** Canada Wire

**WORD COUNT:** 536

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CNS Mike De Souza OTTAWA —Opposition leaders delivered an ultimatum to Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Thursday, demanding he reverse course on his climate change policies and Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan or risk a fall election.

While Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe, whose party propped up the government last spring by supporting the budget, insisted Harper deliver a guarantee that Canada's troops would withdraw from their deadly mission by 2009, the federal Liberals chastised the prime minister for failing to deliver a strong climate change plan.

Canada's military presence in Afghanistan has never been a very popular thing in Quebec. Now it's even less so.

The slip began Sunday with news of the death of Pte. Simon Longtin, the Royal 22nd Regiment's first casualty since its troops started deploying July 15.

With the deaths Wednesday of two more Valcartier-based soldiers, Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, support for the mission now seems in freefall.

Adding to the anti-war mood, a high-profile Quebec TV crew were also victims of the latest Taliban attack, with one cameraman losing the lower part of a leg and a star reporter left questioning why they risked their lives for the story.

As Canada's politician's jockeyed for position on the contentious debate, soldiers at Canadian Forces Bases Valcartier closed ranks in honour of their comrades.

"The men and women in Afghanistan right now want to complete the mission they were given, they want to make a difference," Lt.-Col.

Hercule Gosselin said at the base near Quebec City.

"They understand why we're in Afghanistan. Their families also understand and that's why they support us." Liberal Leader Stephane Dion urged Harper to apply solutions endorsed by all three opposition parties and accept a consensus that was growing among environmentalists, economists and business executives that the minority government's climate change plan is too weak to succeed.

"We believe that all political leaders have a moral obligation to do all that can be done on this critical challenge facing Canada and the world, and to put an end to the partisan politicking around this issue," Dion wrote in a letter to Harper.

Duceppe demanded that a withdrawal from the Afghanistan mission in 2009 be included in the throne speech.

But Dion said he doesn't want to wait until a possible throne speech in October to decide on the future of the Afghanistan mission.

He said the Liberals have insisted since February that Canada should immediately tell its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role when its current commitment ends early in 2009.

"We need to be good partners with our NATO allies and the government of Afghanistan," he said. "We need to give them the time for the replacement. It should be said now." But recent polls suggest that none of the parties is likely to force a fall election since they have little to gain. Over the summer, most opinion surveys found that the Conservatives were hanging on to a slim lead with support levels of around 35 per cent popular support, trailed by the Liberals at about 30 per cent popular support.

"There's no issue that's emerged that forces Canadians away from the choices that they made two Januarys ago, and until one emerges, we are where we are," said Ipsos Reid pollster Darrell Bricker.

"The Tories can't pull ahead and the opposition can't seem to be able to tear them down." — CanWest News Service

# 'I lost a brother' mourns soldier Two Van Doos' deaths follow military victory

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**PUBLICATION:** WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A6

**SECTION:** Canada Wire

**WORD COUNT:** 646

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CNS Marianne White QUEBEC — At the entrance gate of CFB Valcartier, just outside of Quebec City, flowers are left in memory of fallen soldiers Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, and Master Cpl.

Christian Duchesne, 34, who died in action on Wednesday in Afghanistan and also Pte. Simon Longtin, who died on Sunday.

The tragic news shook the military community across the country.

Peter Walsh, a soldier and a personal friend of Duchesne, drove all the way from Petawawa, Ont., about an eight-hour trip, to pay his respects and lay flowers. "I am sad and deeply touched," said Walsh, weeping tears off his cheeks. "I lost a brother. I was there (Afghanistan) with him and just got back (two weeks ago).

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Walsh said.

Walsh, who didn't say what his rank is, added that Quebecers should be more supportive of their troops. "It's so important..." he said with tear-filled eyes. He couldn't finish the sentence and quickly bolted for his car.

The deaths of two Canadian soldiers, their Afghan interpreter and the injuries to another soldier and a Canadian TV cameraman destroyed a moment of exhilaration after the troops won the all-day battle for an Afghan hill.

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy was in the back of the armoured vehicle, preparing a report on the 13-hour battle, when the bomb exploded and seriously wounded his cameraman, Charles Dubois.

"I was preparing the stand-up for my report to say the operation was a success," Roy told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

"At the moment I was writing, there was an immense explosion and I was thrown to the rear. I woke up eight seconds later. Charles was next to me, the others were thrown from the vehicle." At least five Canadian vehicles, including a minesweeper, had passed over the track before the explosion.

"There is no training to prepare us to get through that," said Chief Warrant Officer Pierre Marchand.

Military officials at CFB Valcartier paid tribute to Mercier and Duchesne on Thursday, hailing both soldiers as "proud and devoted" members.

It was Duchesne and Mercier's fourth mission abroad. Both leave behind a spouse and three children.

Chief Sailor Yanick Fournier, who worked closely with Duchesne, said he was a role model for young soldiers and well respected.

Duchesne was a medical technician and Valcartier's chief surgeon said he is going to be greatly missed. "He was a very tall and handsome guy but a quiet person that everyone loved to work with," said Major Nathalie Descoteaux. "It's been very hard on the team, doctors were crying this morning," she added.

Capt. Patrice Carriere, commandant of the 5th Ambulance Unit which Duchesne was part of, had to break the news to his wife and said it was the toughest job of all. "She was stoic and stayed very composed," he said.

Lt.-Col. Hercule Gosselin, is the commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment, has known Mercier for 19 years and described him as joyful, passionate, committed and a hard-working man. He was also described as a pillar of his company.

"I felt a void within when I heard the news. It's tough," Gosselin said, trying to keep his composure.

The recent events don't change the Van Doo determination. "I am passionate about my job and this will not change," said Fournier.

The hill the Canadian troops took sits in the Zhari district, about 50 kilometres west of Kandahar. Zhari and Panjwaii district, just to the south, are Taliban hotbeds that have seen many battles between Canadian troops and insurgents in the past 18 months.

Several times strategic spots have fallen into Taliban hands, only to be retaken by Canadian troops.

The situation has improved greatly compared to a year ago, Gauthier said.

"Last year in the district of Zhari and Panjwaii, it was total war," Gauthier said.

"There were no more civilians in there, all you saw was what you saw in World War II, where artillery would fire, the tanks would roll and clear the region." Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have become the biggest threat facing Canadian troops in recent months, as insurgents adapt their tactics.

Gauthier said Canadian troops are getting better at detecting mines and homemade bombs that are triggered by remote control or pressure plates.

He said 80 or 90 per cent of IEDs are discovered before they blow.

"A very small slice of the remaining per cent has deadly impact on us," Gauthier said.

— CanWest News Service, Canadian Press

# Military's battle cry to ex-soldiers: rejoin Forces strapped, desperate for experienced help

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**PUBLICATION:** WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A6

**SECTION:** Canada Wire

**WORD COUNT:** 538

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CNS David Pugliese OTTAWA — The Canadian Forces has sent a request to experienced ex-military personnel to rejoin the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the ongoing mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent at the end of March by Lt.-Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non-commissioned officers, captains and majors saying their services are needed to shore up the army.

The general points out the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises." In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, the general states there is a high demand for experienced personnel.

"We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," writes Natynczyk, the vice chief of the defence staff.

A retired officer who received one of the letters said he was told the Afghanistan war is overstretching the army and that experienced personnel are desperately required both to train new recruits at home and to fill ranks left vacant because of the number of soldiers who are in Afghanistan.

The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan mission are from the army but an exact breakdown is not available.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same amount training back in Canada ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non-commissioned officers are in particularly high demand for international missions because of their experience. However, the army also needs them to train new recruits at home.

Canada's regular army is around 21,300 strong with 23,900 reservists, military officials said Thursday.

In a posting on the Defence Department's website, the military points out that retired officers are needed for jobs in the infantry, armour, artillery, intelligence and electrical and mechanical engineering areas, among others. For non-commissioned members, the army is seeking artillerymen, weapons technicians, combat engineers, infantry and other occupations.

Natynczyk writes instructors are required for training, full-time support at reserve units and staff within national or international headquarters.

The military needs to increase its ability to train more soldiers to meet its commitments and ensure a quality of life for troops and their families, he adds.



Military spokesman Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky said Thursday the letter was specifically sent to around 2,000 former captains, majors and senior NCOs. About 200 have indicated an interest in rejoining, he added.

The letter was also later posted on a Forces website. "By recruiting people who have previous CF experience this allows us obviously to use them immediately in supervisory roles or specialist roles." said Babinsky. He did not have information if more letters would be sent to specific individuals.

Natynczyk states in his letter that the military is open to welcoming back personnel in the regular forces, the reserves or as civilians.

The Canadian Forces is primarily looking for a full-time commitment but the general writes "we are also willing to be flexible in the amount of time you commit." He wanted to hear from retired personnel by June 15 but added that applications would also be taken after that date.

There is a growing concern the Forces will face an exodus of experienced personnel as large numbers reach retirement age over the next decade.

— CanWest News Service

# EDITORIAL – Mr. Charest remembers

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**PUBLICATION:** WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**PAGE:** A12

**SECTION:** Editorial Leaders

**WORD COUNT:** 447

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Editorial Staff The deaths of three Quebec-based soldiers have sparked a new round of debates and quarrels about Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The Quebec media will likely gorge on the issue over the next few weeks, fuelled in part by the province's historic distaste for foreign wars — whether they are justified or not — and by the usual platitudes and pleadings from political leaders. Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe, for example, says he's now ready to defeat the federal Conservative government unless it promises to withdraw Canadian troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

A few issues stand out amid the tiresome exaggerations and posturing.

First, there is still evidence of principle in public life. Quebec Premier Jean Charest has resisted the temptation to condemn the war, choosing instead to defend Canada's mission. "We have to continue, we must not politicize (our) presence in Afghanistan," Charest said Thursday, urging Quebecers to support the soldiers who are risking their lives to rebuild Afghanistan and to prevent forces hostile to the West from regaining control and renewing their aggression.

Given the shaky minority status of his government, it would have been understandable, if contemptible, if Charest had equivocated.

The first rule of modern politics, after all, appears to be survival, so his stand on principle is a welcome breath of fresh air in an atmosphere of shallow self-interest.

Second, while many Quebec leaders have resisted supporting Canada's wars in the past, regarding them as imperial adventures with no real consequences for la belle province, in fact thousands of French-Canadians have joined the colours over the years and fought with great distinction.

The Royal 22nd Regiment, or Van Doos, as it is popularly called, has battle honours dating to the First World War, when a group of francophone leaders, including former prime minister Wilfred Laurier, lobbied for its creation. George Vanier, its first commander, later became a governor general of Canada.

The regiment, based at Valcartier near Quebec City, now finds itself in Afghanistan, where it has been bloodied with the deaths of three of its members. But typical of all Canadian soldiers, whether they are of French-Canadian ancestry or not, the regiment issued a statement of solidarity Thursday, saying family members understand and support the mission. It's unfortunate when a soldier and his family understand the cause, but the general public does not.

The regiment's motto is *je me souviens*, or I Remember. Indeed, the Van Doos have a lot of history worth remembering and now would be a fitting time for all Canadians to reflect on that glory and remember that we are in Afghanistan to serve the causes of peace and justice.

# Grief, political threats follow combat deaths; Bloc Quebecois, Liberals demand gov't announce troop withdrawal for 2009

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240107  
**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** World  
**PAGE:** C12  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Duchesne; Colour Photo: Mercier ;  
**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda and Nicole Baer  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 692

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As Quebec prepares to receive the bodies of two more soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Canada faces growing emotional and political turmoil about the military mission to the war-torn country.

Disbelief, sorrow and pain were obvious Thursday at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, Que., as soldiers tried to come to terms with the deaths of two more comrades.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, of the 5th Ambulance Company, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment were killed Wednesday when their light armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb.

Another soldier and a Radio-Canada cameraman were also injured in the incident at Gundy Ghar in the Panjwahi district of southern Afghanistan.

On the same day, the flag-draped coffin of Pte. Simon Longtin, killed Sunday, returned to Canada.

On Thursday, Peter Walsh, a personal friend of Duchesne's, drove from Petawawa, Ont., to pay his respects and lay flowers at the entrance gate of Valcartier, just outside Quebec City.

"I am sad and deeply touched," said Walsh, who just returned from Afghanistan two weeks ago. Wiping tears from his cheeks, Walsh praised the soldiers' accomplishments.

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Walsh said, his voice shaky with grief.

The Quebec-based regiment took command of the mission at the beginning of the month. Already, though, pictures of the fallen soldiers are having an effect in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest in Canada. A CROP poll this week found that opposition to sending Quebec troops to Afghanistan increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent in the province after Longtin's death.

The shift in public opinion has also galvanized politicians, with Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe insisting Thursday that the Harper government commit clearly in a speech from the throne to the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Duceppe went so far as to say that committing to a withdrawal is a "minimal requirement" to earn the Bloc's support of a throne speech, which, in turn, is essential for the survival of the government itself. Indeed, he suggested he is ready to bring down the government over the issue, so it can be debated in an election.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has already announced he will not extend the military mission without the consent of Parliament. In light of his minority, he requires the support of at least one opposition party.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, who has the most opposition votes to deliver on any issue, has said he wants the government to immediately advise its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role in 2009.

"We need to give them the time for the replacement," Dion reiterated Thursday, adding the announcement cannot be put off until a throne speech, which some expect in October. "It should be said now."

The latest casualties in Afghanistan bring the Canadian death toll to 70, including one diplomat, since the mission began in 2002.

"It was a huge, huge blast," recalled Patrice Roy, a Radio-Canada reporter who was present but uninjured in Wednesday's blast. "It's difficult to describe . . . it's difficult to imagine."

Roy, the broadcaster's Ottawa bureau chief, talked of the tragedy in a Kandahar news conference. "We were at the end of a very difficult mission," he said. "They told us, 'The Taliban won't shoot because we're so many tanks. It's a demonstration of force, so they will run.'"

But, he added: "They didn't run. They were there, they attacked the convoy, they attacked the first soldiers that were there."

"It's a scene that's difficult to imagine. People were not panicking, but it was so serious. And we didn't know if other mines would be there. So you had to walk to get the bodies," Roy said.

His cameraman, Charles Dubois, was in stable condition Thursday after the amputation of his leg below the knee. He was to be evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

Dubois' injury sparked comment on the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on TV talk shows were already questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of fire.

Surprisingly, however, the mood at the Canadian Forces recruiting centre in downtown Montreal was upbeat. Young men, apparently unconcerned about the latest carnage in far-away Kandahar province, came in looking for information on how to sign up for military service.

"It doesn't make me afraid," said Christian Gallant, 35. "If anything, it motivates me even more."

# Opposition leaders threaten fall election

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240102  
**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** National  
**PAGE:** C10  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Mike De Souza  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 335

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OTTAWA — Opposition leaders delivered an ultimatum to Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Thursday, demanding he reverse course on his climate change policies and Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan or risk a fall election.

While Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe, whose party propped up the government last spring by supporting the budget, insisted Harper deliver a guarantee that Canada's troops would withdraw from their deadly mission by 2009, the federal Liberals chastised the prime minister for failing to deliver a strong climate change plan.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion urged Harper to apply solutions endorsed by all three opposition parties and accept a consensus that was growing among environmentalists, economists and business executives that the minority government's climate change plan is too weak to succeed.

"We believe that all political leaders have a moral obligation to do all that can be done on this critical challenge facing Canada and the world, and to put an end to the partisan politicking around this issue," Dion wrote in a letter to Harper. "To date, your approach falls far short of the best that Canada can do. I urge you to put consensus ahead of confrontation. Every day counts in this battle and we must take real action now."

The warning came two days after Environment Minister John Baird published a report that appears to ignore requirements of a new law, introduced and supported by the opposition parties, calling on the government to honour its international commitments under the Kyoto protocol on climate change by reducing Canada's greenhouse-gas emissions by an average of six per cent below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.

At a news conference, the Liberal leader said Harper should ensure that he saves the legislation, if he goes ahead with plans to shut down Parliament and start a new session with a throne speech in October. Otherwise, Dion said Harper was risking a dangerous political confrontation in the minority Parliament.

# We need you -- again; Stretched Forces ask ex-military personnel to rejoin

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240002  
**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A1 / FRONT  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 766

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The Canadian Forces has sent a request to experienced ex-military personnel to rejoin the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the ongoing mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent at the end of March by Lt.-Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non-commissioned officers, captains and majors saying their services are needed to shore up the army.

The general points out the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, the general states there is a high demand for experienced personnel.

"We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," Natynczyk, vice chief of the defence staff, writes in the letter directed to members of the supplementary reserves,

A retired officer who received one of the letters said he was told the Afghanistan war is overstretching the army and that experienced personnel are desperately required both to train new recruits at home and to fill ranks left vacant because of the number of soldiers who are in Afghanistan. The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan mission are from the army but an exact breakdown is not available.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same amount training back in Canada ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non-commissioned officers are in particularly high demand for international missions because of their experience. But in a catch-22, the army also needs them to train new recruits at home. Canada's regular army is around 21,300 strong with 23,900 reservists, military officials said Thursday.

In a posting on the Defence Department's website, the military points out that retired officers are needed for jobs in the infantry, armour, artillery, intelligence and electrical and mechanical engineering areas, among others. For non-commissioned members, the army is seeking artillerymen, weapons technicians, combat engineers, infantry and other occupations.

Natynczyk writes instructors are required for training, full-time support at reserve units and staff within national or international headquarters.

The military needs to increase its ability to train more soldiers to meet its commitments and ensure a quality of life for troops and their families, he adds.

Military spokesperson Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky said Thursday the letter was specifically sent to around 2,000 former captains, majors and senior NCOs. About 200 have indicated an interest in rejoining, he added.

The letter was also later posted on a Forces website. "By recruiting people who have previous CF experience this allows us obviously to use them immediately in supervisory roles or specialist roles." said Babinsky. He did not have information if more letters would be sent to specific individuals.

Natynczyk states in his letter that the military is open to welcoming back personnel in the regular forces, the reserves or as civilians. The Canadian Forces is primarily looking for a full-time commitment but the general writes "we are also willing to be flexible in the amount of time you commit." He wanted to hear from retired personnel by June 15 but added that applications would also be taken after that date.

In the past, military officials have said the Canadian Forces is exceeding its targets for new recruits but there is a growing concern the Forces will face an exodus of experienced personnel as large numbers reach retirement age during the next decade. A report prepared in 2006 for the Defence Department warned that between this year and 2020, the Canadian Forces will experience a significantly higher rate of attrition as baby boomers hit retirement age.

Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier has acknowledged the potential for the military to face a wave of retirements in the near future. But he suggested in an interview with the Ottawa Citizen earlier this year that the situation might not be as bad as predicted, adding that he is hearing from a growing number of soldiers who have 15 to 25 years of service but who are willing to stay in the ranks.

Explained the general: "I will tell you -- this is the absolute God's truth here from Hillier's lips -- over the last three to six months as I'm travelling around the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, folks are coming up to me and saying, 'You know general a couple of years ago I couldn't wait to get my 20 or 25 years in and go (but) now I want to stay forever.' "

(Ottawa Citizen)

# Journalists recovering from attack on convoy; Conditions stable; Radio-Canada staff breathe sigh of relief

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240130

**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** City

**PAGE:** F1 / FRONT

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Radio-Canada / Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy, above, and cameraman Charles Dubois are expected to return to Ottawa from Germany in a few days, depending on Mr. Dubois' condition. The men were injured by an improvised explosive in Afghanistan. ; Photo: Radio-Canada / Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy and cameraman Charles Dubois, above, are expected to return to Ottawa from Germany in a few days, depending on Mr. Dubois' condition. The men were injured by an improvised explosive in Afghanistan. ;

**BYLINE:** Katie Daubs

**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen

**WORD COUNT:** 525

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The mood in Radio-Canada's Sparks Street newsroom was one of relief yesterday after the news came that Patrice Roy and Charles Dubois, a reporter and cameraman from Gatineau, were both in stable condition.

A day earlier, their vehicle had hit a roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

"People are very glad they were not killed," said Marco Dubé, the regional news manager at Radio Canada. "It's weird for everybody. Today we're still feeling a little bit of the aftermath."

The light-armoured vehicle in which the men were passengers hit a roadside bomb west of Kandahar on Wednesday. Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the 22nd Regiment and Master Corporal Christian Duchesne of the 5th Ambulance company died in the attack, as well as an Afghan interpreter.

Mr. Dubois, a cameraman, was able to talk after having surgery on his badly injured leg, and Mr. Roy, the bureau chief at Parliament Hill, was recovering from shock. Both are familiar faces in the newsroom on Sparks Street, Mr. Dubé said.

Mr. Dubois, 29, grew up in Gatineau. As a young man, he attended La Cité collégiale's television program.

Alain Dussault taught him electronic field production and said he was at the top of his class. Mr. Dussault was surprised several years ago when he found out the quiet Mr. Dubois was doing dangerous international jobs.

"I guess the challenge was there for him," he said.

After graduating in 1998, Mr. Dubois went straight to Radio-Canada, where his eye for precision and stunning imagery has made him a mainstay for almost a decade. The current trek was his fourth to Afghanistan.



"He's a very nice, quiet guy ... a very good cameraman with a lot of sensitivity," said veteran reporter Daniel Lessard, the acting bureau chief when Mr. Dubois was hired.

Mr. Lessard said when Mr. Dubois first came to the newsroom, he was a quick study who developed rapidly.

"He was a bit frustrated when a big story went and he wasn't sent. But you can't be sent all the time," Mr. Lessard said.

This past Christmas, Mr. Dubois went to Afghanistan to visit his brother, Cpl. Martin Dubois. In an interview before he left, he told his colleagues he had to think twice before leaving his wife, Zahra Malik, and their daughter Indya, who was eight months old at the time. But he said he was determined to do the job.

"I met her once," said Mr. Lessard of Ms. Malik. "She has to be very understanding, because when you marry a journalist, you have to know who you're marrying. It's not a 9-to-5 job."

Yesterday, Mr. Dubois' wife and brother were en route to Germany, to the military hospital where Mr. Dubois and Mr. Roy will be today.

Mr. Roy also lives in Gatineau with his wife, Dominique Hetu, and their twin son and daughter, who are around seven years old, Mr. Lessard said.

Mr. Roy grew up in Montreal, and his father is well-known journalist Michel Roy, who was the acting manager of Le Devoir from 1978 to 1981.

Mr. Roy, 44, started at Radio-Canada in 1989. In 2000, he came to Ottawa from Quebec City and took over as bureau chief at Parliament Hill in 2005.

"He always wants to go," Mr. Lessard said. "As soon as he heard, he wanted to be the first one over there."

Both men should be back in Ottawa within a few days, depending on Mr. Dubois' condition, Mr. Lessard said.

Alain Saulnier, general manager of information at Radio-Canada, said the broadcaster will continue its operations in Afghanistan. He said anchorman Bernard Derome will be sent as originally planned, as the broadcaster is focusing on a "team approach."

In the meantime, the newsroom is watching closely.

"I was talking with some of the young cameramen after what happened, and they said yes, they'll be ready to go," Mr. Lessard said.

"I'm 60; I won't go. But if I was 40, I'd go tomorrow morning."

# 'A scene that's difficult to imagine'; Injured journalist questions if reporting is 'worth the risks'

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240013  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A4  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan  
**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda, with files from Jeff Heinrich  
**SOURCE:** The Montreal Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 800

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – They were told it would be a relatively easy mission, that the Taliban would likely flee before Canada's demonstration of its firepower.

But about 13 hours into Operation Eagle Eye, Radio–Canada reporter Patrice Roy and cameraman Charles Dubois were still holed up in a LAV–III armoured vehicle as Canadian Forces exchanged fire with insurgents.

Finally, it appeared the Canadians were ready to seize Gundy Ghar, a small hill west of Kandahar City that had recently lapsed back into Taliban control.

As their vehicle rolled over the hill, Mr. Roy, 44, was preparing to write a TV report hailing the success of the Van Doos regiment's first major combat operation. It was then he felt the "huge blast," Mr. Roy said yesterday in a harrowing account of the attack that killed two Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter.

"It's a scene that's difficult to imagine. People were not panicking but it was so serious, and we didn't know if other mines would be there. So you had to walk to get the bodies," said Mr. Roy, the broadcaster's Ottawa bureau chief.

Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne of the 5th Ambulance company, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the Van Doos, based in Valcartier, Que., were killed in the blast from an improvised explosive device.

"We're brothers in arms. We just lost two more brothers today," said Lt.–Col. Alain Gauthier of the Van Doos, who assumed command of Canada's military operations here this month.

"Our aim is to continue the mission. We strongly believe in what we're doing here."

A third Canadian soldier and Mr. Dubois were also injured in the explosion. Mr. Dubois was in stable condition yesterday, but his leg had to be amputated below the knee. He was to be moved to Germany for further treatment.

Mr. Dubois' injury is sure to invite scrutiny of the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on television talk shows were already questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of fire.

Mr. Roy shared his concerns.

"If we'd known the operation was going to be so dangerous, we wouldn't have gone," he said after the attack. "What I've been asking myself is, are the reports we want to make to explain the war worth the risks that we take and that we make our cameramen take? And I don't have an answer."

In an occasionally emotional interview, Mr. Roy expressed hope that Mr. Dubois will come back strong from the injury.

"We were supposed to play squash on the way back in, and I said maybe this time next year we'll play. He'll find the courage and the energy. He's an exceptionally strong person, and a good person."

Mr. Roy said he did not come to Afghanistan for the adrenalin rush, but to better understand the war he had covered for several years from Ottawa. "I needed to talk to the soldiers and see the terrain," he said.

Lt.-Col. Gauthier said that despite the Canadian casualties, the operation was a success. There has been a "clear improvement" in the past year in the volatile districts of Zhari and Panjwahi, where there was "total war" last summer, he added.

Canada has about 2,500 soldiers stationed here as part of the NATO-led coalition trying to secure and rebuild the country. Sixty-nine Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now been killed in Afghanistan since 2002.

Canada's current military commitment ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he will not extend the mission without the consensus of Parliament.

The mission has been particularly controversial in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest of any province.

A poll this week suggested that the death of the first Van Doo, 23-year-old Pte. Simon Longtin, has already had an effect on public opinion in Quebec. The CROP poll found that opposition to sending Quebec troops to Afghanistan increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent after Pte. Longtin's death on Sunday.

Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe yesterday threatened to help bring down the Harper government if it does not guarantee Canada will withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Mr. Duceppe said he wants Mr. Harper to make a clear commitment in what is expected to be a speech from the throne this fall to bringing home the troops. The commitment, Mr. Duceppe said at a news conference, is a "minimal requirement" to earn the Bloc's support for the speech and, in turn, the potential survival of the government itself.

Thomas Mulcair, the NDP candidate in Outremont, said the party was roundly criticized for its anti-war policy, but "a majority of Canadians and Quebecers now share our view." Canada should switch to its traditional role of "peacekeeping" rather than "search-and-destroy missions in a very aggressive war," Mr. Mulcair said.

In Kujjuuaq, attending a conference on Inuit self-government, Premier Jean Charest reiterated his support for the mission and downplayed public disaffection with the war, saying it hurts troop morale.

In Quebec City, l'Action Démocratique leader Mario Dumont offered his sympathies to the families of the victims of the latest attacks, and said they serve as a reminder of the risks that soldiers and journalists take there.

# Friends honour 'devoted' soldiers

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240012

**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Early

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A4

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Francis Vachon, The Montreal Gazette / Flowers adorn the entrance gate of CFB Valcartier, Que., yesterday, placed there in memory of the fallen soldiers. ; Photo: Department of National Defence / Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne of the 5th Ambulance company and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (the Van Doos) based in Valcartier, Que., were killed in the blast from an improvised explosive device. ;

**DATELINE:** QUEBEC CITY

**BYLINE:** Marianne White

**SOURCE:** The Montreal Gazette

**WORD COUNT:** 432

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QUEBEC CITY – At the entrance gate of CFB Valcartier, just outside of Quebec City, bunches of flowers are hanging on the fence in memory of fallen soldiers Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, and Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, who died in action on Wednesday in Afghanistan and also Pte. Simon Longtin, who died last Sunday.

The tragic news has shaken the military community.

Peter Walsh, a soldier and a friend of Master Cpl. Duchesne, drove from Petawawa, about an eight-hour trip, to pay his respects and lay flowers. "I am sad and deeply touched," said Mr. Walsh wiping tears off his cheeks. "I lost a brother. I was there (in Afghanistan) with him and just got back (two weeks ago).

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," Mr. Walsh said, his voice shaking with emotion.

Mr. Walsh, who didn't say what his rank is, added that Quebecers should be more supportive of their troops. "It's so important ... " he said, his eyes filled eyes. He couldn't finish the sentence and quickly returned to his car.

Military officials at CFB Valcartier paid tribute to Master Warrant Officer Mercier and Master Cpl. Duchesne yesterday, as "proud and devoted" soldiers.

It was the men's fourth mission abroad. Both leave behind a spouse and three children.

Chief Sailor Yanick Fournier, who worked closely with Master Cpl. Duchesne, said he was a role model for young soldiers and well respected.

Master Cpl. Duchesne was a medical technician and Valcartier's chief surgeon said he is going to be greatly missed. "He was a very tall and handsome guy, but a quiet person that everyone loved to work with," said Maj. Nathalie Des-coteaux. "It's been very hard on the team — doctors were crying this morning," she added.

Capt. Patrice Carriere, commander of the 5th Ambulance Unit which Master Cpl. Duchesne was part of, had to break the news to his wife and said it was the toughest job of all. "She was stoic and stayed very composed."

Lt.-Col. Hercule Gosselin, is the commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal 22nd regiment, and knew Master Warrant Officer Mercier for 19 years. He described him as joyful, passionate, committed and a hard working man. He was also described as a pillar of his military company.

"I felt a void within when I heard the news. It's tough," Lt.-Col. Gosselin said, trying to keep his composure. Later, when asked how he is coping with the loss, he said it's part of the professionalism of soldiers to hold back their emotions.

The recent events don't change the Van Doos determination. "I am passionate about my job and this will not change," said Chief Sailor Fournier.

# 'A scene that's difficult to imagine'; Injured journalist questions if reports 'worth the risks'

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240011  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Early  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A4  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan  
**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda, with files from Jeff Heinrich  
**SOURCE:** The Montreal Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 802

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But about 13 hours into Operation Eagle Eye, Radio–Canada reporter Patrice Roy and cameraman Charles Dubois were still holed up in a LAV–III armoured vehicle as Canadian Forces exchanged fire with the insurgents.

Finally, it appeared the Canadians were ready to seize Gundy Ghar, a small hill west of Kandahar City that had recently lapsed back into Taliban control.

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"We're brothers in arms. We just lost two more brothers today," said Lt.–Col. Alain Gauthier of the Van Doos, which assumed command of Canada's military operations here this month.

"Our aim is to continue the mission. We strongly believe in what we're doing here."

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Mr. Dubois' injury is sure to invite scrutiny of the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on TV talk shows were already questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of

fire.

Mr. Roy also shared his concerns.

"If we'd known the operation was going to be so dangerous, we wouldn't have gone," Mr. Roy, said after the attack.

"What I've been asking myself is, are the reports we want to make to explain the war worth the risks that we take and that we make our cameramen take? And I don't have an answer," Mr. Roy said.

In an occasionally emotional interview, Mr. Roy expressed hope that Mr. Dubois will come back strong from the injury.

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Lt.-Col. Gauthier said that, despite the Canadian casualties, the operation was a success. There has been a "clear improvement" in the past year in the volatile districts of Zhari and Panjwahi, where there was "total war" last summer, he added.

Canada has about 2,500 soldiers stationed here as part of the NATO-led coalition that is trying to secure and rebuild the country. Sixty-nine Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now been killed in Afghanistan since 2002.

Canada's current military commitment ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he will not extend the mission without the consensus of Parliament.

The mission has been particularly controversial in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest of any province.

A poll this week suggested that the death of the first Van Doos, 23-year-old Pte. Simon Longtin, has already had an effect on public opinion in Quebec. The CROP poll found that opposition to sending Quebec troops to Afghanistan increased from 57 per cent to 68 per cent after Pte. Longtin's death on Sunday.

Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe yesterday threatened to help bring down the Harper government if it does not guarantee Canada will withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by February 2009.

Mr. Duceppe said he wants Mr. Harper to make a clear commitment in what is expected to be a speech from the throne this fall to bringing home the troops. The commitment, Mr. Duceppe said at a news conference is a "minimal requirement," to earn the Bloc's support for the speech and, in turn, the potential survival of the government itself.

Thomas Mulcair, the NDP candidate in Outremont, said the party was roundly criticized for its anti-war policy, but "a majority of Canadians and Quebecers now share our view." Canada should switch to its traditional role of "peace keeping" rather than "search-and-destroy missions in a very aggressive war," Mr. Mulcair said.

In Kujjuuaq, attending a conference on Inuit self-government, Premier Jean Charest reiterated his support for the mission and downplayed public disaffection with the war, saying it hurts troop morale.

In Quebec City, l'Action Démocratique leader Mario Dumont simply offered his sympathies to the families of the victims of the latest attacks and said they serve as a reminder of the risks soldiers and journalists take there.



# Opposition demands Harper reverse climate, Afghanistan policies

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240010  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A3  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Chris Wattie, Reuters / Liberal leader Stéphane Dion criticized the prime minister during during a news conference in Ottawa yesterday for failing to deliver a strong climate change plan. ;  
**BYLINE:** Mike De Souza  
**SOURCE:** The Montreal Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 586

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Opposition leaders delivered an ultimatum to Prime Minister Stephen Harper yesterday, demanding he reverse course on his climate change policies and Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan or risk a fall election.

While Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe, whose party propped up the government last spring by supporting the budget, insisted Harper deliver a guarantee that Canada's troops would withdraw from their deadly mission by 2009, the federal Liberals chastised the prime minister for failing to deliver a strong climate change plan.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion urged Mr. Harper to apply solutions endorsed by all three opposition parties and accept a consensus that was growing among environmentalists, economists and business executives that the minority government's climate change plan is too weak to succeed.

"We believe that all political leaders have a moral obligation to do all that can be done on this critical challenge facing Canada and the world, and to put an end to the partisan politicking around this issue," Mr. Dion wrote in a letter to Mr. Harper. "To date, your approach falls far short of the best that Canada can do. I urge you to put consensus ahead of confrontation. Every day counts in this battle and we must take real action now."

The warning came two days after Environment Minister John Baird published a report that appears to ignore requirements of a new law, introduced and supported by the opposition parties, calling on the government to honour its international commitments under the Kyoto protocol on climate change by reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by an average of six per cent below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.

At a news conference, the Liberal leader said Mr. Harper should ensure that he saves the legislation, if he goes ahead with plans to shut down Parliament and start a new session with a throne speech in October. Otherwise, Mr. Dion said Mr. Harper was risking a dangerous political confrontation in the minority Parliament.

"If they (shut down Parliament), and they go to another throne speech, everybody knows, everybody, that the risk of an election is going up," Mr. Dion said. "I can't speak for the other parties, but there's no chance, or no risks I should say, that Liberal MPs would rise in support of a throne speech that we judged was going against the best interests of Canadians and the honour of our country."

Meanwhile, Mr. Duceppe raised the stakes by demanding that a withdrawal from the mission in 2009 be included in the throne speech.

But Mr. Dion said he doesn't want to wait until a possible throne speech in October to decide on the future of the Afghanistan mission.

He said the Liberals have insisted since February that Canada should immediately tell its international allies that it plans to withdraw from a combat role when its current commitment ends early in 2009.

"We need to be good partners with our NATO allies and the government of Afghanistan," he said. "We need to give them the time for the replacement. It should be said now."

Under parliamentary tradition, a throne speech sets the government's agenda and can be considered a matter of confidence that could trigger an election if it's not supported by a majority of MPs.

But recent polls suggest that none of the parties is likely to force a fall election since they have little to gain.

Over the summer, most opinion surveys found that the Conservatives were hanging on to a slim lead with support levels of around 35 per cent popular support, trailed by the Liberals at about 30 per cent popular support.

# Pros needed as Afghan war saps resources; Forces puts out call to help train new recruits. Wanted: A few good veterans

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240002

**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A1 / FRONT

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Jean Levac, The Ottawa Citizen / Master Cpl. Gary Mitchell, Cpl. Nicco Harper and Cpl. Justin Young stop for a moment of silence at the SuperEx yesterday to honour two comrades killed Wednesday in Afghanistan. ; Photo: The letter, aimed at recruiting soldiers for the Afghan mission, was sent to about 2,000 former captains, majors and senior non-commissioned officers. Full letter can be seen at [ottawacitizen.com](http://ottawacitizen.com) ;

**BYLINE:** David Pugliese

**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen

**WORD COUNT:** 782

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The Canadian Forces has sent out a request to highly experienced ex-military personnel to come back into the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the ongoing mission to Afghanistan.

Letters were sent out at the end of March by Lt.-Gen. Walter Natynczyk to non-commissioned officers, captains and majors that their services are needed to shore up the army. The general writes that the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, the general states there is a high demand for experienced personnel to fill positions in the military. "We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," writes Lt.-Gen. Natynczyk, the vice-chief of the defence staff.

A retired officer who received one of the letters said he was told the Afghanistan war is overstressing the military and experienced personnel are desperately required to train new recruits at home and to fill ranks left vacant because of the number of soldiers that are in Afghanistan.

The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan war are from the army, but an exact breakdown is not available. To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same amount training back in Canada, ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non-commissioned officers are particularly in high demand for international missions because of their experience, but in a catch-22, the army needs such individuals to train new recruits at home.

Canada's regular army is about 21,300 strong, with 23,900 reservists, military officials said yesterday.

In a posting on the Defence Department's website, the military points out that retired officers are needed for jobs in the infantry, armour, artillery, intelligence and electrical and mechanical engineering areas, among others. For non-commissioned members, the army is seeking artillerymen, weapons technicians, combat engineers, infantry and other occupations.

Lt.-Gen. Natynczyk writes that instructors are required for training, full-time support at reserve units and staff within national or international headquarters. The military needs to increase its ability to train more soldiers to meet its commitments and ensure a quality of life for troops and their families, he adds.

Military spokesman Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky said yesterday the letter was specifically sent to around 2,000 former captains, majors and senior non-commissioned officers. About 200 have indicated an interest in rejoining the regular Canadian Forces, he added. The letter was also later posted on the website.

"By recruiting people who have previous CF experience, this allows us obviously to use them immediately in supervisory roles or specialist roles." said Lt.-Cmdr. Babinsky.

He did not have information if more letters were going to be sent out to specific individuals.

Lt.-Gen. Natynczyk states in his letter that the military is open to welcoming back personnel in the regular forces, the reserves or as civilians. The Canadian Forces is primarily looking for a full-time commitment, but the general writes "we are also willing to be flexible in the amount of time you commit."

He wanted to hear from retired personnel by June 15, but added that applications would also be taken after that date.

In the past, military officials have said that the Canadian Forces is exceeding its targets for new recruits, but there is a growing concern the Forces will face an exodus of experienced personnel as large numbers of serving soldiers reach retirement age over the next decade.

A report prepared in 2006 for the Defence Department warned that between this year and 2020 the Canadian Forces will experience a significantly higher rate of attrition as baby boomers hit retirement age.

Chief of Defence Gen. Rick Hillier has acknowledged the potential for the military to face a wave of retirements in the near future. But he suggested in an interview with the Citizen earlier this year that the situation might not be as bad as predicted, adding that he is hearing from a growing number of soldiers who have 15 to 25 years of service, but who are willing to stay in the ranks.

Explained the general: "I will tell you -- this is the absolute God's truth here from Hillier's lips -- over the last three to six months as I'm travelling around the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, folks are coming up to me and saying, 'You know general, a couple of years ago I couldn't wait to get my 20 or 25 years in and go, (but) now I want to stay forever.' "

# Faces of sadness, stories of triumph from Afghanistan

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240059  
**PUBLICATION:** National Post  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** National  
**SECTION:** Editorials  
**PAGE:** A14  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Color Photo: Fred Thornhill, Reuters / Private Benoit Longtin walks hand in hand with his father, Maurice, after carrying the casket of his brother Private Simon Longtin to a hearse at the Canadian Forces Base Trenton on Wednesday. ;  
**BYLINE:** Charles Bernard  
**SOURCE:** National Post  
**WORD COUNT:** 118

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Re: The Day In Photos, [nationalpost.com](http://nationalpost.com), Aug. 22.

We often hear complaints about the media choosing to publish photographs of anguished people in the midst of personal tragedies. Surely, at times, those complaints are warranted. However, the heartbreaking photograph of Private Maurice Longtin clutching his father's hand while openly grieving for his brother is an image that I am very glad I saw and that I never want to forget.

In less confusing times, this photograph, and others like it, probably would serve to unite our country in grief, but, because of current political wranglings over the war in Afghanistan, it has probably been robbed of its power for some. Not for me, though.

Charles Bernard, Gloucester, Ont.

**KEYWORDS:** 0

# Faces of sadness, stories of triumph from Afghanistan

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240054  
**PUBLICATION:** National Post  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** National  
**SECTION:** Editorials  
**PAGE:** A14  
**BYLINE:** Gerry Brosso  
**SOURCE:** National Post  
**WORD COUNT:** 188

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Re:What Else Do We Know?, Father Raymond J. de Souza, Aug. 23.

With the greatest of respect for Father Raymond J. de Souza, our men and women in uniform know why they're in Afghanistan. The message delivered to the great unwashed public by many media outlets has been convoluted at best, altered because of personal or editorial bias at worst. Therein lies the "grossly unbalanced" problem that he writes about.

But there's hope. Even the CBC had to grudgingly reveal last week that matters are improving in Afghanistan. After years of strife, the network reported that many Afghans are now confident enough to seek out small loans to improve accommodation and lifestyle; something that would have never occurred under a Taliban state.

I too attended a funeral for one of our fallen soldiers. He was a husband and a dad. He had friends and was loved. The message at that funeral about commitment was clear and understood. Canada is currently taking a stand in Afghanistan to ensure that twisted insurrectionists won't be roaming the streets of Toronto, Kingston and my town in the days to come.

Gerry Brosso, Gananoque, Ont.

**KEYWORDS:** 0

# Journalists didn't expect conflict on tour; Media's Place On Front Lines Called Into Question

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240018  
**PUBLICATION:** National Post  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** National  
**SECTION:** Canada  
**PAGE:** A6  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Black & White Photo: / Master Corporal Christian Duchesne; Black & White Photo: / Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier ; Black & White Photo: / Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy ;  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, AFGHANI STAN  
**BYLINE:** Andrew Mayeda  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service, with files from Marianne White  
**WORD COUNT:** 697

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, AFGHANI STAN – They were told it would be a relatively easy mission, that the Taliban would likely flee before the demonstration of Canadian firepower.

But about 13 hours into Operation Eagle Eye, Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy and cameraman Charles Dubois were still holed up in a LAV-III armoured vehicle as Canadian Forces exchanged fire with the insurgents.

Finally, it appeared the Canadians were ready to seize Gundy Ghar, a small hill west of Kandahar City that had recently lapsed back into Taliban control.

As their vehicle rolled over the hill, Roy, 44, was preparing to write a TV report hailing the success of the Van Doo regiment's first major combat operation. It was then he felt the "huge blast," Mr. Roy said yesterday in a harrowing account of the attack that killed two Canadian soldiers and one Afghan interpreter.

Mr. Roy told reporters that he lost consciousness for several seconds and awoke to find Mr. Dubois beside him; the others had been ejected from the vehicle.

"It's a scene that's difficult to imagine. People were not panicking, but it was so serious. And we didn't know if other mines would be there. So you had to walk to get the bodies," said Mr. Roy, the broadcaster's Ottawa bureau chief.

Master Corporal Christian Duchesne of the 5th Ambulance company and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (the Van Doos), based in Valcartier, Que., were killed in the blast from an improvised explosive device.

"We're brothers in arms. We just lost two more brothers today," said Lieutenant-Colonel Alain Gauthier of the Van Doos, which assumed command of Canada's military operations here this month.

"Our aim is to continue the mission. We strongly believe in what we're doing here."

A third Canadian soldier and Mr. Dubois were also injured in the explosion. Mr. Dubois was in stable condition yesterday, but his leg had to be amputated below the knee. He was to be evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

Mr. Dubois' injury is sure to invite scrutiny of the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on TV talk shows were already questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of fire.

"For [my family], it was the part of my mission that they underlined before my departure: 'Why are you going there? It's too dangerous.' I always responded, 'No, no. You'll see... I'm not a soldier. I won't go in the front and — bang, yes it did happen,'" Mr. Dubois said in an occasionally emotional interview.

"I felt terribly bad. I was worried for my children to see the news in Canada."

Mr. Roy expressed hope that Mr. Dubois will come back strong from the injury.

"We were supposed to play squash on the way back in and I said maybe this time next year we'll play. He'll find the courage and the energy. He's an exceptionally strong person and a good person."

Mr. Roy said he did not come to Afghanistan for the adrenalin rush, but to better understand the war that he had covered for several years from Ottawa.

"I needed to talk to the soldiers and see the terrain," he said.

Lt.-Col. Gauthier said that, despite the Canadian casualties, the operation was a success. There has been a "clear improvement" in the past year in the volatile districts of Zhari and Panjwaii, where there was "total war" last summer, he added.

"I really saw the difference that we made. The economy is improving and women can even play soccer. That would never have happened before," said Peter Walsh, a soldier and a personal friend of Master Cpl. Duchesne.

Mr. Walsh drove all the way to CFB Valcartier, just outside Quebec City from Petawawa, Ont., about an eight-hour trip, to pay his respects and lay flowers. "I am sad and deeply touched," said Mr. Walsh, who didn't say what his rank is. "I lost a brother. I was there [Afghanistan] with him and just got back [two weeks ago]."

At the entrance gate of CFB Valcartier, bunches of flowers hung on the fence in memory of the two fallen soldiers and also Private Simon Longtin, who died last Sunday.

It was Master Cpl. Duchesne and Master Warrant Officer Mercier's fourth mission abroad. Both leave behind a spouse and three children.

Canada has about 2,500 soldiers stationed here as part of the NATO-led coalition that is trying to secure and rebuild the country. Sixty-nine Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now been killed in Afghanistan since 2002.

Canada's current military commitment ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he will not extend the mission without the consensus of Parliament.

The mission has been particularly controversial in Quebec, where support for the war is the lowest of any province.



**KEYWORDS: WAR**

# DION HINTS AT HOUSE TURMOIL; Liberal Leader, Duceppe Attack Harper's Plan For Afghanistan

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240012  
**PUBLICATION:** National Post  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** National  
**SECTION:** Canada  
**PAGE:** A4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Black & White Photo: / (See hardcopy for Photo Description);  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Mike De Souza  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service, with files from Philip Authier  
**WORD COUNT:** 485

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OTTAWA – Liberal leader Stephane Dion hinted at more parliamentary turmoil to come if the Conservative government takes its minority into a fall session without paying heed to opposition demands.

While complaining about Tory policies on the environment and Afghanistan, Mr. Dion said Prime Minister Stephen Harper was risking a dangerous political confrontation in the minority Parliament, which many believe will not reconvene until after Ontario's provincial election on Oct. 10.

"If they [shut down Parliament], and they go to another Throne Speech, everybody knows, everybody, that the risk of an election is going up," Mr. Dion said. "I can't speak for the other parties but there's no chance, or no risks I should say, that Liberal MPs would rise in support of a Throne Speech that we judged was going against the best interests of Canadians and the honour of our country."

Recent polls suggest none of the parties is likely to force a fall election because they have little to gain. Over the summer, most opinion surveys found the Conservatives were hanging on to a slim lead with support levels of around 35% popular support, trailed by the Liberals at about 30% popular support.

Mr. Dion also joined Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe in attacking Conservative plans for the mission to Afghanistan. Although Mr. Harper has pledged to seek a consensus from Parliament over the future of the mission after 2009, and indicated to U.S. President George W. Bush this week that Canada's combat role is likely to end then, the two opposition leaders continued to demand assurances.

Mr. Duceppe insisted Mr. Harper deliver a guarantee troops would withdraw by 2009. Mr. Dion said Canada should immediately tell its international allies it plans to withdraw from a combat role in 2009. "We need to be good partners with our NATO allies and the government of Afghanistan," he said.

Mr. Dion also urged the government to adopt the Clean Air and Climate Change Act, endorsed last spring by the three opposition parties, which sets tougher targets and regulations to force large industries to change their practices.

Mr. Dion chastised the Conservatives over a climate change report released on Tuesday. The report was issued to comply with legislation forced through Parliament by the opposition parties last spring, requiring the government make plans to meet greenhouse gas emission levels in the Kyoto accord. Wednesday's report, however, was mainly a restatement of previous Conservative plans.

"We believe that all political leaders have a moral obligation to do all that can be done on this critical challenge facing Canada and the world, and to put an end to the partisan politicking around this issue," Mr. Dion wrote in a letter to Mr. Harper.

"To date, your approach falls far short of the best that Canada can do. I urge you to put consensus ahead of confrontation. Every day counts in this battle and we must take real action now."

**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

# MILITARY ASKS VETS TO REJOIN; Afghanistan Mission Puts Pressure On Recruiters

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240003  
**PUBLICATION:** National Post  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** National  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A1  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**NOTE:** Journalist recalls blast, A6 Letters to the editor, Page A14  
**WORD COUNT:** 749

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OTTAWA – The Canadian Forces is urging experienced former military personnel to return to the ranks as it tries to recruit enough soldiers for the future and deal with the fallout from the mission to Afghanistan.

A letter was mailed in March by Lieutenant-General Walter Natynczyk to non-commissioned officers, captains and majors, telling them their services were needed to shore up the army.

The Lieutenant-General wrote that the military is not only working to expand the regular and reserve forces, but "we are also facing greater demands for Canada to support more and more overseas missions while maintaining a healthy force within Canada to respond to domestic crises."

In the letter, directed to members of the supplementary reserves, Lt.-Gen. Natynczyk, the vice-chief of the defence staff, said there is a high demand for experienced personnel to fill positions in the army.

"We are looking for trained professionals to assist in a variety of ways in various locations and under a range of employment options," he wrote.

A retired officer who received the letter said he was told the Afghanistan mission is overstressing the army and that experienced personnel are desperately required both to train new recruits at home and to fill ranks left vacant because of the number of soldiers who are in Afghanistan.

The bulk of the 2,500 military personnel assigned to the Afghanistan mission are from the army but an exact breakdown is not available.

To keep such numbers in the field, the army is required to have at least the same number training in Canada, ready to deploy to Afghanistan.

Senior non-commissioned officers are particularly in high demand for international missions because of their experience, but the army also needs such individuals to train new recruits at home.

Canada's regular army is approximately 21,300 strong and there are about 23,900 reservists, military officials said yesterday.

In a posting on the Defence department's Web site, the military points out that retired officers are needed for jobs in the infantry, armour, artillery, intelligence and electrical and mechanical engineering areas, among others.

For non-commissioned members, the army is seeking artillerymen, weapons technicians, combat engineers, infantry and other occupations. Lt.-Gen. Natynczyk writes that instructors are required for training, full-time support at reserve units and staff within national or international headquarters.

The military needs to increase its ability to train more soldiers to meet its commitments and ensure a quality of life for troops and their families, he adds.

Military spokesman Lieutenant-Commander Pierre Babinsky said yesterday the letter was specifically sent to approximately 2,000 former captains, majors and senior non-commissioned officers. About 200 have indicated an interest in rejoining the regular Canadian Forces, he added.

The letter was also later posted on the Web site. "By recruiting people who have previous CF experience, this allows us obviously to use them immediately in supervisory roles or specialist roles," Lt.-Cmdr. Babinsky said. He did not know whether more letters were going to be sent out to specific individuals.

Lt.-Gen. Natynczyk states in his letter that the military is open to welcoming back personnel in the regular forces, the reserves or as civilians.

The Forces is primarily looking for a full-time commitment, but the Lieutenant-General writes, "we are also willing to be flexible in the amount of time you commit." He wanted to hear from retired personnel by June 15 but added that applications would also be taken after that date.

In the past, officials have said the Forces is exceeding its targets for new recruits, but there is a growing concern the military will face an exodus of experienced personnel as large numbers of serving soldiers reach retirement age over the next decade.

A report prepared in 2006 for the Defence Department warned that between this year and 2020, the Forces will experience a significantly higher rate of attrition as Baby Boomers hit retirement age.

Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier has acknowledged the potential for the military to face a wave of retirements in the near future. But he suggested in an interview with the Ottawa Citizen this year that the situation might not be as bad as predicted, adding that he is hearing from a growing number of soldiers who have 15 to 25 years of service but who are willing to stay in the ranks.

Explained the General: "I will tell you — this is the absolute God's truth here from Hillier's lips — over the last three to six months as I'm travelling around the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, folks are coming up to me and saying, 'You know General, a couple of years ago, I couldn't wait to get my 20 or 25 years in and go [but] now I want to stay forever.' "

**KEYWORDS:** ARMED FORCES

# Support for mission relatively stable: polls; Not Swayed By Deaths

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<b>IDNUMBER</b>	200708240001
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	National Post
<b>DATE:</b>	2007.08.24
<b>EDITION:</b>	National
<b>SECTION:</b>	News
<b>PAGE:</b>	A1
<b>ILLUSTRATION:</b>	Graphic/Diagram: Andrew Barr, National Post / (See hardcopyfor Chart/Graph) ;
<b>BYLINE:</b>	Tom Blackwell
<b>SOURCE:</b>	National Post
<b>WORD COUNT:</b>	680

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As the Canadian death toll climbs in Afghanistan, conventional wisdom would suggest that public support for the bloody mission will plummet in direct response.

Polling data accumulated over the past year and a half, however, tells a more complex tale, indicating that opinion on the divisive issue has held relatively stable — sometimes even after troop deaths — and that Canadians may be more likely to approve of the historic military mission when they are told more about it.

"It's been incredibly consistent," said John Wright of pollster Ipsos Reid. "We've polled during some of the worst times for the Canadian military, we've been in the field when there have been six soldiers killed ... We've been sure we can [conduct polls] whenever sentiment would be worst, and it seems to have held."

In fact, what pollsters ask people would appear to have almost as much impact on opinion as what is happening in Afghanistan itself, some analysts say.

When questions in a Defence Department poll emphasized protecting civilians and rebuilding the country, support for the mission shot up.

When asked by Decima Research if they thought the number of Canadian casualties was acceptable, on the other hand, two-thirds of respondents answered in the negative.

The deaths of soldiers from the Quebec-based Van Doos regiment could alter the whole equation. In the one province already firmly opposed to sending troops to Afghanistan, a CROP survey partly conducted after the death of Private Simon Longtin on Sunday recorded an 11 percentage point increase, to 68%, of Quebecers opposed to their compatriots being involved in the conflict. That was before the two most recent deaths.

But until the past few days, at least, opinion levels were surprisingly predictable.

A series of polls conducted by Ipsos Reid for CanWest News Service and Global Television since January, 2006, all asking the same question, has seen support for the mission roller-coaster from 44% to 52%, then back down below 50%, then up again to a peak of 57% last fall. There has been a slow slide to 50% support since then, but the results over 18 months plot a relatively flat line that has hovered around 50% backing.

The company found that news of a soldier being killed did not seem to alter the polling numbers significantly,

Mr. Wright said.

Strategic Counsel has recorded similar fluctuations and a similar range of variation in its polls since early 2006, after a fast drop from 55% support in March of that year.

The difference is that its surveys have backing for the mission hovering around the 40% mark, 10 points below those of Ipsos Reid.

A spokesman for the company refused to comment on its results, citing its contract with another media outlet. Rob Huebert of the University of Calgary's Centre for Military and Strategic Studies suggested the difference in the two pollsters' results can be traced to the questions they pose.

Ipsos Reid asks respondents about their support for "the use of Canada's troops for security and combat efforts against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan."

Strategic Counsel asks simply about "the decision to send Canadian troops to Afghanistan."

"They set up the issue differently," Prof. Huebert said. "It is not a coincidence that the one that clearly defines the threat gets the higher response ... People won't think immediately of why we are there. If you mention Taliban and al-Qaeda, people will clue in."

In a string of polls for the National Defence Department in late 2006 and early 2007, Ipsos Reid tweaked the questions even further, and found dramatic differences in response.

When the question referred to military operations that help to secure "the environment for the civilian population" through activities "that include combat," backing shot up to the low 60s.

After a lengthy preamble that said Canada is trying to improve human rights for women and build a more free and democratic society in Afghanistan, another question drew support from 81%.

It suggests that explaining the purpose of the mission is all-important if the government wants to boost the tepid support among Canadians for the operation, said Alex Morrison of the Canadian Institute for Strategic Studies.

"The polling has indicated to the government that it is not doing a good job of communicating why we are in Afghanistan. The government recognizes that but consistently refuses to do anything about it," he said.

"Unless the government starts telling Canadians often, frequently, why we are there, I don't think the numbers will change very much."

**KEYWORDS:** OPINION POLLS; MARKET RESEARCH

# Canada is bearing a disproportionate load in Afghanistan; Our casualty rate gives us a strong case for scaling back operations in 2009

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240068  
**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
**PAGE:** A19  
**COLUMN:** L. Ian MacDonald  
**KEYWORDS:** WAR; IRAQ; ARMED FORCES; UNITED STATES  
**BYLINE:** L. IAN MACDONALD  
**SOURCE:** The Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 848

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Opposition to Canada's mission in Afghanistan has always been strongest in Quebec, and will only intensify in light of this week's death of three Quebecers in roadside bombings near Kandahar.

This brings to six the number of Quebecers who have died in Afghanistan, beginning with Cpl. Ainsworth Dyer's death in the infamous friendly fire incident from a U.S. bomber in 2002.

This is still only about 10 per cent of the 69 Canadians who have been killed in Afghanistan, though the percentage of Quebec casualties is certain to rise over the duration of the Van Doos' rotation leading the mission. There are two months remaining before an expected winter lull (there were no Canadians killed from last November to March).

Support for the humanitarian aspects of the mission actually runs quite high in Quebec, but the operations against the Taliban in the south are widely perceived as part of George W. Bush's wider war on terror centred in Iraq, rather than a UN-approved, NATO-led mission to liberate and rebuild the broken country of Afghanistan.

At the Montebello summit this week, President Bush went out of his way to praise Canadian troops for their "brilliant" and brave contributions to the effort in Afghanistan, but in Quebec that only underlined the point it was his war. White House officials, in a press briefing aboard Air Force One and later at Montebello, also were unusually sensitive to the politically delicate position of the Canadian government on the Afghan mission. And that's putting it delicately.

CROP was in the field for La Presse last weekend when the first Van Doo was killed and the news of Pte. Simon Longtin's death dropped support for the mission in Quebec from 35 to 28 per cent overnight, and 31 per cent overall, as opposed to 65 per cent opposed.

In other words, two Quebecers in three are opposed to the mission. Only 33 per cent approve of the Van Doos' deployment and only 33 per cent believe Canadian troops should be deployed in Afghanistan until 2009. Thus, only one Quebecer in three believes Canada should fulfill its commitment to Afghanistan and undertaking to NATO to complete our obligation in Kandahar to February 2009.



All of which indicates if casualties from Quebec mount, there will be more political fallout for the Harper government.

But the narrower focus on troops from Valcartier misses the larger point that Canadian troops have been taking disproportionate number of casualties in Afghanistan.

All but the four friendly fire deaths, and a handful of others on patrol out of Camp Julien in Kabul, have occurred since Canadian troops redeployed from the relative safety of the capital to the dangerous Kandahar region, home of the Taliban.

As of yesterday, Canada had suffered 69 deaths in Afghanistan, only one less than Britain, though the British have stationed well over twice as many troops there, about 6,500, as we have. The Americans, with about 15,000 troops remaining in Afghanistan, have suffered 361 deaths since launching Operation Enduring Freedom in response to the events of 9/11 in October 2001.

After that, the discrepancy in NATO casualty numbers is quite striking. The Dutch, with about 3,000 troops in Afghanistan, have suffered only nine deaths, the same number as the Italians, and only one fewer than the French. The Germans, with 3,000 troops posted to Afghanistan, have accounted for 24 deaths among losses suffered by

NATO's International Security Assistance Force. In all, according to the ISAF website, 37 countries have contributed 41,000 troops to the mission.

There is no question that Canada is suffering a disproportionate number of casualties because of the heavy lifting we are doing in the south. It's very clear from a look at the casualty list. Kabul, where only a few troops died on patrol, was relatively safe duty; Kandahar is very dangerous. The nature of our casualties also speaks to the deadly character of the Taliban insurgency: 31 Canadians have now died as a result of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), while another 11 have died in suicide bombings, six have died from friendly fire, while only 13 have died in direct combat from hostile fire. Less than 20 per cent of our deaths have been suffered in direct engagements with the Taliban.

It doesn't really matter anymore that we got to Kandahar because General Rick Hillier lobbied hard for the redeployment, and the Liberal government of Paul Martin approved it in the summer of 2005 (even though most Liberals voted against renewing the mission when in opposition in 2006, and Martin himself couldn't be bothered to show up for the vote).

The important fact is that Canada is carrying an unfair share of the load in terms of troops in harm's way, and it's time for other NATO countries to step up in terms of burden-sharing.

Canada is not a cut-and-run country, and we should fulfill our commitments to NATO. But these numbers make a very strong case for rotating out of Kandahar in 2009, even while remaining in Afghanistan at the head of another provincial reconstruction team and to help build a civil society in one of the most ravaged nations in the world.

[www.lianmacdonald.ca](http://www.lianmacdonald.ca)

# Tired old refrain

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240062  
**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
**PAGE:** A18  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Samaa Elibyari: questioned by CSIS.;  
**KEYWORDS:** 0  
**SOURCE:** The Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 173

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Re: "Victims of profiling" (Letters, Aug. 22).

Nisar Ahmed offers the tired old refrain about increased scrutiny by CSIS of Muslims like Samaa Elibyari ("CSIS visits can be chilling" Gazette, Aug. 18). When will the Muslim community understand that because of the anonymous and unpredictable nature of Islamic suicide bombers, CSIS has no choice but to profile Muslims?

After all, it was Islamic extremists who killed thousands of innocent civilians in 2006 – not Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Shinto or any other type of terrorists. And would-be suicide bombers don't wear T-shirts announcing "Don't scrutinize other Muslims, I'm the bomber."

Islamic writers will counter my opinion with another tired old refrain, that Christian crusaders are slaughtering thousands of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. But again, this is a falsehood. Most of the killing in those places is done by Muslims.

The Islamic community must get to the point where it recognizes the critical difference between an identifiable soldier on defensive security patrol and the obscene, offensive actions of suicide bombers specifically targeting innocent civilians.

Pierre Gauthier

Pointe Claire

# Feds must explain Afghan mission

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240059  
**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
**PAGE:** A18  
**KEYWORDS:** PREMIERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; QUEBEC  
**SOURCE:** The Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 449

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New polling data suggests Afghanistan casualties among Canadian soldiers from Quebec have further reduced already low public support for the mission in this province.

So where is the prime minister? Where are his Quebec and other ministers, and his MPs? He, and they, should be here defending and explaining the mission.

Two of Stephen Harper's top people, Heritage Minister Josée Verner and Defence Minister Peter MacKay, have been in the province in the past few days, but their visits were short and low-profile.

Sixty-nine Canadian soldiers have died in the Afghanistan mission since 2002. Their families and fellow citizens want to believe their sacrifice has served a higher purpose. It is the job of the country's political leaders, who have committed our armed forces to the mission, to explain why we must continue it.

The deaths this week of two more soldiers from Quebec, just hours after the body of another Quebecer arrived back in Canada, sent support for the mission to new lows among Quebecers, an opinion survey indicated.

Part of the drop can, we believe, be attributed to a kind of "hometown" sense of loss. Within Quebec's close-knit francophone society, the deaths of three young men within a short period of time seems to have set off a chain reaction of anger, confirming again the province's longstanding public opposition to almost any military measures.

Only one Quebecer in three supports the idea that Canada should remain in Afghanistan until February 2009, our scheduled withdrawal date. By comparison, one in two people polled in the rest of Canada say they support the Afghanistan mission.

This is clear evidence of the need for federal politicians to get out among the electorate, especially in Quebec, and explain what Canadian soldiers are doing in a country where Canada has few direct bilateral interests.

There are good answers to that question, which we have cited in this space and will not repeat here. These answers will not, however, convince people who don't get to hear them explained.

Premier Jean Charest offered this week a welcome expression of support for the soldiers in Afghanistan, while steering around the merits of the mission. That's fair enough: he's a premier, not the federal PM. The Conservative government itself must carry the ball on this.

Harper should, however, be able to call on the opposition Liberals to defend the mission as well. Stéphane Dion has imposed a deadline – no further combat role beyond February 2009 – which is his right. But it

would be fair and reasonable to ask Dion, and for that matter former prime minister Paul Martin, who first committed our troops – to help explain the mission better to all Canadians.

Grief colours perception. But the understandable sadness of a province for the loss of its young should not be allowed to cripple our efforts.

# Soldiers see off fallen warriors; 'We lost two more brothers in arms,' commander says

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240010

**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette

**DATE:** 2007.08.24

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A3

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: FRANCIS VACHON, THE GAZETTE / A sign at the entrance of Canadian Forces Base in Valcartier waves to the "boys" and wishes them good luck. The deaths of three Quebec-based soldiers so early in the Van Doos' tour of duty in Afghanistan has shaken the province and the military community across the country. ;

**KEYWORDS:** WAR

**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR

**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service

**WORD COUNT:** 447

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The latest two Canadian soldiers to be killed in Afghanistan were given a sombre sendoff early today by hundreds of their comrades.

Soldiers carried the flag-draped coffins of Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne, 34, and Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier, 43, across the tarmac at the Kandahar Airfield, as others looked on.

The ramp ceremony has become a familiar scene for Canadian troops during the mission in Afghanistan, in which 69 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed since 2002.

Duchesne, of the 5 Field Ambulance unit, and Mercier, of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22e Régiment (the Van Doos), were killed Wednesday when their light armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb.

Radio-Canada reporter Patrice Roy gave a harrowing account yesterday of the attack that killed Duchesne, Mercier and an Afghan interpreter.

Roy said that he and cameraman Charles Dubois had been told it would be a relatively easy mission, that the Taliban would likely flee before the demonstration of Canadian firepower.

But about 13 hours into Operation Eagle Eye, they were still holed up in a LAV-III armoured vehicle as Canadian Forces exchanged fire with the insurgents.

Finally, it appeared the Canadians were ready to seize Gundy Ghar, a small hill west of Kandahar City that had recently lapsed back into Taliban control.

As their vehicle rolled over the hill, Roy, 44, was preparing to write a TV report hailing the success of the Van Doos' first major combat operation.

It was then he felt the "huge blast," Roy said.

"It's a scene that's difficult to imagine. People were not panicking, but it was so serious. And we didn't know if other mines would be there. So you had to walk to get the bodies," said Roy, the broadcaster's Ottawa bureau chief.

A third Canadian soldier and Dubois were also injured in the explosion.

Dubois was in stable condition yesterday, but his leg had to be amputated below the knee. He was to be evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

Dubois's injury is sure to invite scrutiny of the practice of "embedding" Canadian journalists with the military. Pundits on TV talk shows were already questioning the wisdom of sending journalists into the line of fire.

In the occasionally emotional interview, Roy expressed hope that Dubois will come back strong from the injury.

"We were supposed to play squash on the way back in and I said maybe this time next year we'll play.

"He'll find the courage and the energy. He's an exceptionally strong person and a good person."

Roy said he did not come to Afghanistan for the adrenalin rush, but to better understand the war that he had covered for several years from Ottawa.

"I needed to talk to the soldiers and see the terrain," he said.

Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier of the Van Doos, who assumed command of Canada's military operations here this month, said: "We're brothers in arms. We just lost two more brothers today.

"Our aim is to continue the mission. We strongly believe in what we're doing here."

Gauthier said that, despite the Canadian casualties, the operation was a success. There has been a "clear improvement" in the past year in the volatile districts of Zhari and Panjwahi, where there was "total war" last summer, he added.

Canada has about 2,500 soldiers stationed here as part of the NATO-led coalition that is trying to secure and rebuild the country.

Canada's current military commitment ends in February 2009.

# Breaking the heartbreaking news; Toughest job of all, captain says 'There is no easy way to do this,' officer admits. 'You just have to practise'

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**IDNUMBER** 200708240009  
**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette  
**DATE:** 2007.08.24  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A3  
**KEYWORDS:** !@DATELINE=CFB VALCARTIER  
**BYLINE:** MARIANNE WHITE  
**SOURCE:** Canwest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 316

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The relatives have been told the terrible news 69 times since Canadian soldiers began serving in Afghanistan in 2002.

Yesterday, Capt. Patrice Carrière, commandant of the 5 Field Ambulance unit of which Master Cpl. Christian Duchesne was part, described how he had to break the awful news to Duchesne's wife that her husband had been killed in an explosion on the other side of the world.

That, he told reporters yesterday at the Valcartier military base, was the toughest job of all.

Carrière said the training he had received for the difficult task helped him a lot. "There is no easy way to do this," he said. "You just have to practise."

Carrière had some time to prepare what he would say before breaking the news to Duchesne's widow. "I went through all that needed to be said."

He went to see her with his unit chaplain and his sergeant major. "I took a deep breath, counted to three and knocked on the door," he recalled. "When she saw us, she knew something was wrong.

"She managed to send the children to the neighbours so that she could deal with it."

Carrière said he was impressed by the woman's reaction. "She took the news as well as I could have hoped for. She was stoic and stayed very composed," he said.

Lt.-Col. Hercule Gosselin, commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal 22e Régiment, didn't deliver the bad news to the widow of Master Warrant Officer Mario Mercier personally, but told reporters at the Valcartier base yesterday the family took the news with dignity and courage.

Gosselin knew Mercier and described him as joyful, passionate, committed and a hard-working man. Mercier was also described as a pillar of his military company. "I felt a void within when I heard the news. It's tough," Gosselin said, trying to keep his composure.

Later, when asked how he is coping with the loss, Gosselin said it's part of the professionalism of soldiers to hold back their emotions.

Breaking the heartbreaking news; Toughest job of all, captain says 'There is no easy way to do this,' officer admits.

The recent events don't change the Van Doos' determination to succeed in Afghanistan.

Chief Sailor Yanick Fournier, who knew Duchesne, summed it up: "I am passionate about my job and this will not change."

Breaking the heartbreaking news; Toughest job of all, captain says 'There is no easy way to do this,' officer