

Prairiepundit

Bin Laden favors genocide in Darfur

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Byline: Merv

AP/CBS:

Osama Bin Laden renewed his call for a holy war against a proposed peacekeeping force in Sudan's wartorn region of Darfur in a message that appeared on Web sites Tuesday.

The audio recording was accompanied by a still picture of the al Qaeda leader, and excerpts were aired Monday by Al-Jazeera television.

Bin Laden called for foreign forces to be driven from Darfur.

"It is the duty of the people of Islam in the Sudan and its environs, especially the Arabian Peninsula, to perform jihad against the Crusader invaders and wage armed rebellion to remove those who let them in," he said, according to a transcript provided by IntelCenter, which monitors extremist Web sites.

Bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawhiri, made a similar call for jihad in Darfur in a Sept. 20 video message, and bin Laden issued an audiotape in 2006 calling on his followers to go to Sudan to fight a proposed U.N. force there.

In Tuesday's message, bin Laden referred to talks between Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, and Saudi officials who pressed him to agree to a joint U.N.- African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur. Those meetings took place in March and April.

...

Al Qaeda has become genocides R us. This is just an acknowledgment of what has followed this group wherever they have tried to impose their will be it Somalia or Afghanistan and now Darfur, Sudan. In the parts released earlier he acknowledged that al Qaeda made mistakes in Iraq with their mass murder of non combatants, but, hey, everybody makes mistakes.

The fact is that the al Qaeda brand is in steep decline throughout the Muslim world and his audience is shrinking among those who think he has some ideas worth pursuing. He and the Democrats are on the wrong side of history right now and both are scrambling to recover.

Thomson Financial News Asia Select

8 Central Asian countries to meet in Nov to discuss regional cooperation - ADB

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) said eight member countries of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) programme will meet in Dushanbe in Tajikistan on Nov 2-3 to discuss ways to deepen interaction and integrate more effectively with world markets.

Ministers and officials from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and representatives of CAREC's six partner multilateral institutions, bilateral and other regional organisations will meet during the sixth ministerial conference, the ADB said.

The initiatives to be considered at the meeting include the CAREC Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy, which would support the development of six strategic transport corridors crisscrossing the region, thereby improving access of these economies to each other and to global markets, the bank said.

'These efforts will improve the flow of people and goods around the region and across borders, providing a firm foundation for sustained growth,' said Craig Steffensen, head of ADB's CAREC unit said.

The ADB stated the second initiative is the establishment of the CAREC Institute to enhance the capabilities of CAREC government officials to engage in regional cooperation processes and to plan and implement regional cooperation projects.

CAREC is an ADB-supported initiative to encourage economic cooperation in Central Asia.

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English News Service

Afghan security forces capture suspected Taliban militant

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Afghan security forces capture suspected Taliban militant

KABUL, Oct. 24 (Xinhua) -- Afghan security forces have captured a suspected Taliban militant in Afghanistan's northwest Badghis province, a statement of Afghanistan National Security Directorate said on Wednesday.

"Our personnel captured a Taliban terrorist Mullah Sarajudin from Abi Kamar district of Badghis province," said the statement released here.

However, it did not mention the exact date of his capture.

The accused, an Afghan national, had confessed that he had set on fire two schools and fired rockets on Badghis airbase and in return the Taliban commander in the region Mullah Abdul Rahman Haqani awarded him a sum of money worth 1,666 U.S. dollars, according to the statement.

The Taliban insurgents have yet to make comment.

The Taliban, after being removed from power by the U.S. invasion in late 2001, has waged a war against the Afghan administration and the international troops being deployed in the country with security and reconstruction mission.

English News Service

U.S.-led coalition forces kill militants in central Afghanistan

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

U.S.-led coalition forces kill militants in central Afghanistan

KABUL, Oct. 24 (Xinhua) -- The U.S.-led coalition forces killed several militants and detained another two militants during a late Tuesday evening operation in central Afghan province of Wardak, a coalition statement said Wednesday.

The coalition forces were attacked by militants when they made their way to compounds in the Nerkh District of Wardak where intelligence sources indicated militant forces were hiding, said the statement.

"Targeting their attackers, Coalition forces returned fire, killing the militants," it quoted a coalition spokesman as saying.

Resuming their search of the compounds, the coalition forces detained two individuals with suspected ties to militant forces, the statement said.

There were no reports of civilian casualties during the operation, it added.

Various violence incidents have claimed over 5,200 lives, mostly of Taliban militants, this year in war-torn Afghanistan where Afghan government forces backed by a 55,000 strong international troops are fighting the Taliban insurgency.

English News Service

Major news items in leading Afghan newspapers

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Major news items in leading Afghan newspapers

KABUL, Oct.24 (Xinhua) -- The following are major news items in Afghan leading newspapers on Wednesday.

Cheragh:

-- Government troops and Taliban insurgents fought in Tagab district in Kapisa province some 80 km north of Kabul on Monday but there were no casualties.

-- Government troops killed 12 suspected Taliban insurgents in Wardak province on Monday, Afghan defense Ministry said Tuesday.

Outlook:

-- Commission for holding joint Jirga or tribal assembly between Afghanistan and Pakistan would hold its meeting next month.

-- President Bush wants 46 billion more U.S. dollars for war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Daily Afghanistan:

-- Afghanistan's Wolesi Jirga or the Lower House of parliament has called on government to investigate Afghan ambassador in Germany for hosting Israeli diplomat.

English News Service

Roundup: One child dead and four others wounded in Afghan anti-militant fighting

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Roundup: One child dead and four others wounded in Afghan anti-militant fighting

By Zhang Yunlong, Lin Jing

KABUL, Oct. 23 (Xinhua) -- One child has been killed and four others injured in fighting between militants and U.S.-led coalition forces in Afghanistan's southeast Zabul province. Five militants were also killed in the clash Tuesday, according to a coalition statement.

The reports of accidental civilian deaths follow five days of bitter fighting in which Afghan security forces killed at least 80 militants in anti-extremist operations in eastern, southern and central provinces of the country.

The dead child's age and other details are yet to be known.

In a statement, the coalition forces said they were attacked with small-arms fire while searching a nomadic camp for suspected militants in Jeldak district of Zabul Tuesday. Five of the militants died in the ensuing firefight.

"One of the militants attacked coalition forces from a tent in the camp. Coalition forces returned fire, killing the attacker," a coalition spokesman was quoted as saying.

"After searching the tent where the militant fired at coalition forces, the body of a deceased child and four wounded children were discovered," the spokesman added.

The wounded children were evacuated to a medical facility for treatment, said a statement.

Three civilians were killed and 11 others were wounded in the eastern Afghan province of Kunar during a firefight between Taliban insurgents and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on Oct. 20, according to an earlier ISAF statement.

Rising civilian casualties in Taliban-related fighting are fueling resentment of Afghanistan-based international troops and the Afghan government. Foreign troops have been asked to do their best to avoid killing civilians.

Tom Koenigs, top UN convoy in Afghanistan, said at least 1,200 civilians have been killed since January this year in Afghanistan's various violent incidents.

Koenigs said that it is imperative that protecting civilians remains at the forefront of everyone's efforts

in Afghanistan because failing to do so will result in more conflict and violence and will undermine the legitimacy of the ISAF.

Currently a 55,000-strong force of international troops comprising the ISAF and U.S.-led coalition members is in Afghanistan to secure security and assist in reconstruction.

After being toppled by the U.S. invasion in late 2001, the Taliban has waged a war against the Afghan administration and international troops.

Taliban-related violence and attacks have claimed over 5,200 lives in the war-torn country so far this year, more than in the whole of 2006.

English News Service

NATO soldier dies, 2 others sustain injuries in E. Afghanistan

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

NATO soldier dies, 2 others sustain injuries in E. Afghanistan

KABUL, Oct. 24 (Xinhua) -- A soldier of NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been killed and two others wounded during a firefight with insurgent in eastern Afghan province of Kunar, said an ISAF statement issued late Tuesday.

The statement did not disclose the casualty's nationality. It added that there were no reports of civilian casualties in the operation.

Currently a 55,000 strong international troops including ISAF are in war- torn Afghanistan for securing peace and assisting in reconstruction.

The New York Times

STATE DEPT. USE OF CONTRACTORS LEAPS IN 4 YEARS

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 1

Section: Foreign

Byline: JOHN M. BRODER and DAVID ROHDE; John M. Broder reported from Washington, and David Rohde from Washington, Baghdad and Kabul, Afghanistan. Paul von Zielbauer contributed reporting from Baghdad.

Dateline: WASHINGTON, Oct. 19

Illustrations: PHOTO: A DynCorp worker, kneeling, trained policemen recently near Kabul. DynCorp got 94 percent of \$2.2 billion in police training and drug eradication contracts from a State Department bureau. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX BECHERER/POLARIS, FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) (pg. A8) CHART: The Rise Of Two Contractors: The government's increasing use of private contractors has fueled the growth of companies like Blackwater USA and DynCorp International. There are two bar graphs listed. One for Blackwater USA FEDERAL CONTRACTS: Won most of a State Department contract for security in central Iraq and Kabul. (Source: OMB Watch

DynCorp)

And another for DynCorp International REVENUE: 37 percent of revenue in 2005 came from contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Over the past four years, the amount of money the State Department pays to private security and law enforcement contractors has soared to nearly \$4 billion a year from \$1 billion, administration officials said Tuesday, but they said that the department had added few new officials to oversee the contracts.

It was the first time that the administration had outlined the ballooning scope of the contracts, and it provided a new indication of how the State Department's efforts to monitor private companies had not kept pace. Auditors and outside experts say the results have been vast cost overruns, poor contract performance and, in some cases, violence that has so far gone unpunished.

A vast majority of the money goes to companies like DynCorp International and Blackwater USA to protect diplomats overseas, train foreign police forces and assist in drug eradication programs. There are only 17 contract compliance officers at the State Department's management bureau overseeing spending of the billions of dollars on these programs, officials said.

Two new reports have delivered harsh judgments about the State Department's handling of the contracts, including the protective services contract that employs Blackwater guards whose involvement in a Sept. 16 shooting in Baghdad has raised questions about their role in guarding American diplomats in Iraq.

In a report made public on Tuesday, a review panel found that there were too few American officials in Iraq to enforce the rules that apply to Blackwater and other security contractors. It also found that the conduct of the contractors had undermined the broader mission of ending the insurgency and establishing a democratic government in Iraq.

Ms. Rice approved a number of the review panel's recommendations intended to strengthen oversight of the security contractors, including a revision of the rules for the use of deadly force to bring them more in line with the military's rules of engagement, and creation of review panels to investigate every incident involving the injury or killing of a civilian. The panels could refer possible instances of wrongdoing to the Justice Department. The contractors would also undergo more rigorous

training in Iraqi culture and language.

The other report was an audit of the State Department's oversight of DynCorp, released Tuesday, which found that records tracking hundreds of millions of dollars paid to the company were in "disarray."

Interviews with administration officials, auditors and outside experts show that the use of contractors has grown far beyond what department officials imagined when they first outsourced critical security functions in 1994 and hired private security guards to protect American diplomats in Haiti, which was thrown into turmoil by civil strife.

Today, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the small State Department office that oversees the private security contractors in Iraq and elsewhere, is overwhelmed by its responsibilities to supervise the contractors, according to former employees, members of Congress and outside experts. They say the office has grown too reliant on, and too close to, the 1,200 private soldiers who now guard American officials overseas.

"They simply didn't have enough eyes and ears watching what was going on," said Peter W. Singer, an expert on security contractors at the Brookings Institution. "Secondly, they seemed to show no interest in using the sanctions they had."

Another State Department office, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, has issued more than \$2.2 billion in contracts for police training and drug eradication in Iraq, Afghanistan, Latin America and elsewhere, according to State Department records. Ninety-four percent of that money has gone to DynCorp.

State Department officials say they have tried to increase competition, but few companies are able to operate in war zones. "The lack of competition does concern us a great deal," said a senior State Department official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "We want as many companies as possible."

State Department contracting officials complain that they do not have nearly enough people to properly oversee the more than 2,500 contractors now under

their informal command around the world. And a proposal to charge contractors a fee to pay for additional government compliance officers has stalled in the State Department bureaucracy.

The ballooning budget for outside contracts at the State Department is emblematic of a broader trend, contracting experts say.

The Bush administration has doubled the amount of government money going to all types of contractors to \$400 billion, creating a new and thriving class of post-9/11 corporations carrying out delicate work for the government. But the number of government employees issuing, managing and auditing contracts has barely grown.

"That's a criticism that's true of not just State but of almost every agency," said Jody Freeman, an expert on administrative law at Harvard Law School.

On the eve of the 1994 American invasion of Haiti, the State Department's law enforcement bureau received an urgent request. The department needed 45 American police officers to help secure the nation.

Officials in the small bureau contacted DynCorp, a Texas aviation services company with a \$30 million bureau contract to operate counternarcotics flights in Latin America. Impressed with its aviation work, a selection committee awarded DynCorp a small contract.

State Department officials viewed it as an interim measure. DynCorp viewed it as an opportunity. "We always saw it as a growth area because of the conflicts in the world," said Steve Cannon, a former DynCorp executive.

Later that year, DynCorp won a contract from the diplomatic security office to guard American diplomats in Haiti. Over the next several years, the two small State Department offices issued more than \$250 million in police training and diplomatic security contracts to DynCorp for work in Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo.

After the 2001 American invasion of Afghanistan, contracts grew again, eventually bringing the company \$400 million a year. The law enforcement office had DynCorp dispatch dozens, then hundreds, of police trainers to Afghanistan. The diplomatic security office had DynCorp send employees to guard the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai.

Former State Department officials and Afghan officials said the DynCorp guards were far too aggressive in their tactics, and their conduct alienated Afghan and European officials, as well as Afghan citizens. Gregory Lagana, a DynCorp spokesman, said the company agreed there was a problem and replaced the guards. "The demeanor, the swagger, was wrong," he said. "We put a stop to that."

State Department officials said DynCorp had performed well over all, and won most contracts through competitive bidding.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq opened new opportunities in the burgeoning world of government security. Blackwater got a toehold with a \$27 million no-bid contract to guard L. Paul Bremer III, the administrator of the American occupation in Baghdad. A year later, the State Department expanded that contract to \$100 million. Blackwater now employs 845 of the more than 1,100 private security contractors at work in Iraq and holds a contract worth \$1.2 billion.

Assistant Secretary of State Richard J. Griffin, who oversees the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, told Congress this month that his office had 36 agents overseeing the guards.

Congressional investigators say the security bureau has sought to minimize episodes like the shootings of civilians.

"We are all better off getting this case -- and any similar cases -- behind us quickly," one State Department security official in Iraq wrote to another, after Blackwater guards killed a father of six in Hilla in 2005, according to an internal State Department memo turned over to Congress. He recommended paying the man's family \$5,000.

The State Department took no action against Blackwater for the killing. Blackwater declined to comment for this article. The company has denied any wrongdoing and said that its techniques have resulted in no diplomats, visiting members of Congress or other American dignitaries being killed or seriously hurt in thousands of escort missions since 2005. Twenty-seven Blackwater employees have died in Iraq.

DynCorp's work and the department's oversight of the company have been questioned also. In interviews in Iraq and Afghanistan, local police officials said DynCorp's trainers were costly and in some cases poorly qualified. The trainers are mostly retired civilian police officers from the United States who are paid up to \$134,000 in Iraq and \$118,000 in Afghanistan for a year of service.

State Department and DynCorp officials said all of the trainers were carefully screened and well qualified. Department officials also said they had added some two dozen staffers to oversee DynCorp over the past year.

American military officials in Iraq and Afghanistan said the quality of trainers was mixed as well. Jonathan Shiroma, a captain in the California National Guard who worked with DynCorp trainers in Iraq from 2005 to 2006, said some were "outstanding," while others preferred to remain on base.

DynCorp and Blackwater, meanwhile, continue to win contracts.

The State Department has said it will continue to rely on contractors because, for now at least, it has no choice. It cannot quickly hire the bodyguards and

trainers it would need to replace the contractors, and the military does not have the trained personnel to take over the job.

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The New York Times

Spacious Food Bazaar in Turin Plans Manhattan Branch

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

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Section: Dining, Dining Out/Cultural

Byline: ALAN TARDI

Illustrations: PHOTO: ITALIAN, BIG TIME: Oscar Farinetti will soon be bringing a smaller version of Eataly, his giant specialty food store in Turin, to Midtown Manhattan. (PHOTOGRAPH BY DINO FRACCHIA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

OSCAR FARINETTI was born into a family of artisanal food producers in the Piedmontese town of Alba, famous for white truffles and red wines.

"My surname," he said, "comes from the Italian word for flour because my ancestors have always been pasta makers." His father expanded the family pasta shop into a grocery store and it eventually began selling items other than food as well.

When Mr. Farinetti, now 53, entered the family business in 1978, he focused on electronics and turned the former grocery store into Italy's biggest electronics chain, UniEuro. He sold it in 2003 and returned to the food business, but in a much less humble way.

In January, in what had been a defunct vermouth factory in Turin, he opened a 30,000-square-foot megastore called Eataly that combines elements of a bustling European open market, a Whole-Foods-style supermarket, a high-end food court and a New Age learning center.

"Eataly's goal," Mr. Farinetti said, "is to make high-quality Italian foods available to everyone, at sustainable prices and in an informal environment where they can shop, taste and learn."

Similar stores are planned for major cities throughout Italy, but first, New York.

In the spring Eataly will open in a two-level, 10,000-square-foot space in the new Centria building at 18 West 48th Street. Mr. Farinetti's partner in this venture is Jules Demchick, the president of J. D. Carlisle Development Corporation, which owns the building.

In the Turin original the main floor consists of eight specific areas: a butcher specializing in certified Piedmontese beef; a wood-burning bread bakery and pizza oven; a huge cheese section with a subterranean aging cellar; cured meats; fresh fish; pasta; and vegetables. Each area is overseen by an expert in the field and has a casual restaurant featuring the respective ingredients. Downstairs are a pub that offers a wide selection of artisanal beers, a wine bar serving tapas and a full-service 50-seat restaurant.

Artisanal products from some 900 Italian producers fill the store's shelves, and 12 suppliers (some of which Mr. Farinetti invested in or bought outright) were enlisted as partners. Many of the food items are accompanied by explanatory placards and nearly half of the three-level store is dedicated to educational activities: a computer center, a library, a vermouth

museum and rooms for cooking classes and tasting seminars.

Slow Food, the international nonprofit culinary educational organization founded by Mr. Farinetti's longtime friend Carlo Petrini, is a consulting adviser to Eataly, though it receives no direct financial gain. Products in the store endorsed by Slow Food are indicated by the group's snail logo and an area is devoted to Slow Food displays. (Mr. Farinetti is also president of the complex in Pollenzo, Italy, that is the home of Slow Food's University of Gastronomic Sciences.)

People pack Eataly on weekends and evenings. At lunch on a recent weekday many stood around waiting for a seat to open up in the restaurants. According to management, more than 1.5 million people visited the store in its first six months and sales have exceeded projections.

The Midtown Manhattan store will be smaller, more expensive and more selective than the original. A wood-burning bread oven will be situated just inside the front door. Fresh beef will be supplied from a herd of Piedmontese cattle in New Jersey and vegetables will be grown locally. Everything else -- cheese, cured meats, packaged foods -- will be Italian, but because of space limitations and federal restrictions on some food imports, the selection will be much smaller than in Turin. (There will not be a fish section.)

Educational activities will be minimal at the New York store. Turin's store has 10 places to eat; New York's will have two, one specializing in pasta, the other meat, with a total of just over 100 seats. (Unlike those at Eataly Turin, these restaurants will serve food all day and offer prepared food for takeout.)

Mr. Farinetti said he hoped to "stupefy New Yorkers and firmly establish the Eataly brand on the very highest level." He plans to follow it with a full-scale replica of the Turin store in Manhattan's meatpacking district in 2011 and says he has already secured a space there.

"Italian cuisine," Mr. Farinetti said, "is not only one of the best in the world, it's also one of the most exportable. With Eataly, my intention was to create a universal format that would work equally well in Afghanistan or Peking or New York or Milan. So far, there is only one such enterprise: it's called Ikea and its furniture is identical throughout the entire world. With Italian food it should be even easier. I believe what we did in Torino could be transplanted anywhere and work just as well."

English News Service

News items from Asia-Pacific Desk of Xinhua (Part 1)

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

News items from Asia-Pacific Desk of Xinhua (Part 1)

HONG KONG, Oct. 24 (Xinhua) -- Following are news items from the Asia-Pacific Desk of Xinhua in Hong Kong Wednesday:

Major news items in leading New Zealand newspapers

Major news items in leading Australian newspapers

Major news items in leading Fiji newspapers

Major news items in leading Philippine newspapers

Strong quake hits Sumatra, Indonesia

Earthquake hits southern Sumatra, Indonesia

Tokyo stocks open modestly higher

Foreign exchange rates in Thailand

Major news items in leading Japanese newspapers

Lawyer shocked by reports on Hannef's case

Hong Kong stocks open higher -- Oct. 24

8 countries discuss closer cooperation on Malacca Strait

Major news items in Thailand's leading newspapers

Cambodian new voter registration brings total of voters to 8 mln

Genting group founder Lim Goh Tong dies

Tokyo stocks up modestly in morning

Major news items in leading Nepali newspapers

10 killed in Sri Lankan Clashes

Foreign exchange rates in Nepal

Earthquake rattles NZ coast

Major news items in leading Indian newspapers

Malaysian state sees crime rates down

Nepal, UN to discuss longer term for UNMIN

Potential for Malaysia to be among top investment destinations

Major news items in leading Pakistani newspapers

Major news items in leading Singapore newspapers

NATO soldier dies, 2 others sustain injuries in E. Afghanistan

1st test-tube baby born in Bangladesh

Hong Kong stocks finish higher at midday -- Oct. 24

Philippines to receive 3.1 mln foreign travelers in 2007: report

Windstorm kills 1 in Indonesia

CPN-M may quit parliament: party leader

Major news items in leading Vietnamese newspapers

Indonesia asks developed countries to pay more for rainforest protection

Vietnam ready to have religious dialogue with U.S.

Foreign exchange rates in Philippines

Vietnam to have stronger voice in int'l affairs: top leaders

Vietnamese Transport Ministry to equitize 22 subsidiaries

Vietnamese realty firms lag behind foreign rivals

Vietnam sees higher export earnings in first 10 months

Vietnam to fight corruption vigorously

France to finance Vietnam 44.8 mln USD to improve clean water supply

Indonesia restricts visits to Bali bombers in death row

(Sports) China's top golfer Wen-chong to extend lead in Indonesia

Int'l students allowed one year stay in NZ to seek job

Major news items in leading Afghan newspapers

Stocks close higher in Philippines

Indonesia customs holds 5 planes for customs irregularities

Environment ministers discuss roadmap to Bali's climate change talks

U.S.-led coalition forces kill militants in central Afghanistan

4,000 security men advancing towards NW Pakistan

Afghan security forces capture suspected Taliban militant

Japan's foreign trade value reaches new high

Royal Decree on Thai election to be published

Tokyo stocks decline to one-month low

Roundup: Vietnam strives for stronger economic development in 2008

Hong Kong stocks end lower -- Oct. 24

Laos hosts regional telecommunications meeting

Cambodia on right track of economic development: Nobel laureate

Vietnam stock market index closes higher

Taiwan stocks end lower -- Oct. 24

Foreign exchange rates in Indonesia

The New York Times

Chairman of Joint Chiefs Solicits Complaints, and Young Officers Are Ready

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 11

Section: National

Byline: THOM SHANKER

Dateline: FORT SILL, Okla., Oct. 23

Illustrations: Photo: Adm. Mike Mullen, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with his audience of junior officers at Fort Sill yesterday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY CHAD J. MCNEELEY/UNITED STATES NAVY)

Adm. Mike Mullen invited candor from the Army on Tuesday, and he got it: questions from young captains frustrated by what they described as disciplinary problems in the ranks, shoddy health care for their spouses and children, and depots emptied of combat gear needed for training.

With the conflict in Iraq now nearly a year longer than American involvement in World War II, Admiral Mullen, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was also asked whether senior officers had considered putting a limit on how long any one soldier could be deployed in combat.

"Is there a point where we can say, sir, 'Enough'?" one captain asked.

"I recognize the sacrifice," Admiral Mullen responded, adding that the current American military had acquired the most combat experience in the nation's history, "and I don't want to lose that" through a lack of re-enlistments. He said the service chiefs had made it a priority to balance combat deployments with time at home.

The visit to the Army's artillery center here on the red clay flatlands of southwest Oklahoma was Admiral Mullen's first stop on a tour of three Army installations to meet with troops and underscore his attention to the effect of combat deployments on soldiers and marines.

In a 90-minute session filled with give-and-take, he spoke with more than 100 officers, most of them captains attending a course to help prepare them for higher command. In response to some questions, he asked for e-mail addresses so he could follow up with more complete answers, a pledge that surprised, and pleased, his listeners.

Admiral Mullen told them his priorities were to "reconstitute, reset, revitalize" a military strained by long deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and the officers told him repeatedly that their morale remained high.

But they made clear that their families wanted some relief. And the captains themselves wanted assurances that they would have first-class troops to lead and enough quality equipment to train for success.

As part of an effort to expand the ground forces and fulfill deployments, the Army has lowered the bar on some of its standards for new soldiers, and the

officers at Fort Sill told Admiral Mullen that the move had caused a new set of problems.

One Iraq veteran said he had witnessed increased disciplinary problems among troops, which he attributed to the enlistment of recruits with lower academic credentials as well as some who have been granted "moral waivers," a step that allows those with minor criminal records to join up.

This captain, whose name was withheld under ground rules for reporters observing the session, spoke of training all day and then having to spend much of the night on disciplinary action. Of the roughly 100 soldiers in his unit, about a dozen had been caught selling drugs or going absent without leave.

"Making sure we do not break our military is a huge priority for me," said Admiral Mullen, who vowed to review statistics on discipline so he could gauge any impact of the current recruiting standards.

Most of the officers wore a combat patch representing a past deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. At the rank of captain, they are rapidly approaching a five-year mark that allows them to end their active-duty service, and the decision forces them to weigh continued commitment to the military against commitments to marriage and family.

"All I want to do is start a family, buy a house, have stability," said one, who expressed readiness to return to Iraq so long as he and his wife had assurance that they could settle at a single military post and not be transferred to a new unit when he returned from combat.

Another officer, an Iraq veteran, said his wife, now pregnant with their second child, complained that the pediatric care she sought from their local military hospital was substandard. As a result, he said, he is now planning to separate from the Army within the year.

The admiral called caring for families of deploying military personnel a "vital issue." But he also noted that military doctors and nurses sent from bases like Fort Sill to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan were themselves "working overtime."

One captain told the admiral that because of the focus on Iraq, combat equipment at home for training was "either broken, outdated or improperly maintained."

Admiral Mullen said he was pressing for money to

repair or replace combat gear. "It's going to take some time to solve that," he said.

Before continuing on his tour, with stops later Tuesday at Fort Leavenworth and on Wednesday at Fort Riley, both in Kansas, the admiral assured the young officers that he had heard them.

"I don't offer instantaneous solutions," he said. "But I know what's on your mind."

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The New York Times

Afghanistan: Battle Kills Militants and Civilians, Officials Say

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

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Section: Foreign

Byline: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Column: WORLD BRIEFING ASIA

NATO and Afghan troops called in airstrikes during a battle against insurgents on Monday that left 20 suspected militants and several civilians dead in Wardak Province, just west of Kabul, officials said. The casualty figures varied widely. Afghan officials said 3 to 12 civilians were killed in the fighting. A NATO spokesman, Maj. Charles Anthony, said soldiers were investigating.

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The New York Times

Bush Stands By His Plan for Missile Defenses in Europe

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 9

Section: Foreign

Byline: STEVEN LEE MYERS

Dateline: WASHINGTON, Oct. 23

Illustrations: PHOTO: President Bush was surrounded by officers after speaking at the National Defense University. (PHOTOGRAPH BY DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES)

President Bush on Tuesday strongly defended plans to build missile defenses in Europe, arguing that Iran posed an urgent threat to some NATO allies. He also chided the Democratic-controlled Congress for cutting spending that he called "vital to the security of America."

"The need for missile defense in Europe is real, and I believe it is urgent," Mr. Bush said, speaking at the National Defense University here. "Iran is pursuing the technology that could be used to produce nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles of increasing range that could deliver them."

Mr. Bush's remarks -- part of a broad defense of the administration's national security strategy after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks -- came only 11 days after his secretaries of state and defense went to Moscow and discussed ways to ease Russia's concerns over the deployment of missile defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic.

While Mr. Bush invited Russian cooperation, he also made it clear that the administration intended to proceed with building missile sites as part of a plan to deploy the interceptor missiles in several years. His tone appeared more hawkish than that of Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who had said earlier in the day in Prague that while the United States wanted the deployment to move forward, the missiles might not be activated immediately after being deployed.

"We have not fully developed this proposal," Mr. Gates said, appearing with the Czech prime minister, Mirek Topolánek, "but the idea was we would go forward with the negotiations, we would complete the negotiations, we would develop the sites, build the sites, but perhaps delay activating them until there was concrete proof of the threat from Iran."

At the meetings in Moscow, on Oct. 12 and 13, the Russians called for the United States to freeze the planned deployment of the missiles in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic. While Mr. Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice ruled that out, the two countries did agree to share information about potential threats from Iran.

Mr. Bush would like to make missile defense a defining legacy of his presidency, though critics say the initial system, with a limited number of missile interceptors in Alaska and California, remains unproven. Missile defense has been a core of Republican ideology since Ronald Reagan proposed what came to be known as the "Star Wars" program in 1983, and it remains hugely popular among the

Republican candidates vying to succeed Mr. Bush.

"We should move as quickly as we can to build missile defense," Rudolph W. Giuliani said during the Republican candidates' debate on Sunday night in Orlando, Fla. Senator John McCain said that the objections of President Vladimir V. Putin were not an obstacle to deploying a system, but rather a justification of it.

"This is a dangerous person, and he has to understand that there's a cost to some of his actions," Mr. McCain said. "And the first thing I would do is make sure that we have a missile defense system in place" in Poland and the Czech Republic.

The Democratic presidential candidates, by contrast, have rarely discussed it and, when they do, usually criticize it for soaking up resources that might be better spent on more pressing threats or domestic needs.

Mr. Bush suggested that missile defenses would be a deterrent the same way that an overwhelming capacity for nuclear retaliation once was with the Soviet Union.

"A terrorist regime that can strike America or our allies with a ballistic missile is likely to see this power as giving them free rein for acts of aggression and intimidation in their own neighborhoods," he said. "But with missile defenses in place, the calculus of deterrence changes in our favor. If this same terrorist regime does not have confidence their missile attack would be successful, it is less likely to engage in acts of aggression in the first place."

In speaking at the National Defense University, Mr. Bush was returning to the place where he first pledged to build a national missile defense more than six and a half years ago. But critics questioned the urgency of the threat, and even Mr. Bush said that intelligence agencies did not believe that Iran could build a ballistic missile capable of striking the United States before 2015 -- and then only with foreign assistance.

"There are a lot of ifs, ands and buts," Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington, said of Iran's missile abilities.

The administration hopes to reach agreements by year's end with Poland and the Czech Republic and to break ground on the missile sites before Mr. Bush leaves office.

Mr. Bush raised the issue again now, aides said, to fend off Congressional efforts to cut spending, which he said would delay the deployments in Europe "for a year or more." Mr. Bush, who the day before asked Congress to approve \$196 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other programs, complained that Congress was proposing cutting \$290 million from the \$8.9 billion he proposed for missile defense in the current fiscal year.

Representative Ellen O. Tauscher of California, a Democrat, dismissed Mr. Bush's criticism. She said there was bipartisan support for defenses focused on more immediate threats of shorter-range missiles that could strike American allies or forces in the Middle East and Europe.

"There's no need for us to rush ahead to deal with an emerging threat," she said, referring to Iran's possible development of intercontinental missiles, "when we have such gaps now for the current threat."

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The Ottawa Citizen

Thinking BYG pays off for hard-luck trio

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: B1 / FRONT

Section: City

Byline: Kelly Egan

Column: Kelly Egan

Source: The Ottawa Citizen

Illustrations: Colour Photo: Julie Oliver, The Ottawa Citizen / Marcel Gervais, left, an amputee and nearly blind, says he was nearly suicidal until he, Keith Baker, right, and Alcide Yelle began designing, making and selling board games for people with impaired vision.

Photo: Courtesy Keith Baker / Alcide Yelle, 73, is the 'slave driver,' in charge of production.

Marcel Gervais was born on Christmas Day in 1942, an accident of timing that cannot escape early mention.

"They call me God."

And haven't his trials been absolutely biblical? A diabetic for much of his life, he is now 90-per-cent blind, suffers from kidney failure and lost both legs to amputation four years ago.

"I tell you. It's the best thing that ever happened to me," he said of losing his limbs. "I was just crying with pain in my legs. The morphine just couldn't kill it."

Mr. Gervais, who spent 31 years with Canadian Pacific, has been living at Saint-Vincent Hospital on Cambridge Street for two years. He takes dialysis three times a week, insulin every day, and moves about in a motorized wheelchair.

"Unless you know what it's like to be stuck in a wheelchair in a hospital room, you don't know how bad it can be. It's worse than being in jail."

Well, Marcel Gervais has broken out of prison. It is a tale of -- first -- finding friends, then together finding purpose.

Over the course of last winter, Mr. Gervais would routinely play cribbage with another resident, Alcide Yelle, 73, also an amputee. Keith Baker, 50, would join them in the activity room. Not a cribbage player, he would often keep score.

Mr. Gervais, it became clear, could no longer see the cribbage board, normally a rectangular piece of wood with 120 small holes.

"When I saw the problem these guys were having, my mind started working," said Mr. Baker, who suffers from complications related to extreme obesity. Why not make the board bigger and brighter? he thought.

A former audiovisual technician, he started fiddling with his laptop computer and came up with a way to produce a colourful grid. He printed out sheets of standard paper, with yellow, red and blue rows, to which he added numbers.

The men asked the hospital for a piece of wood. They glued on the paper, then lacquered it. It wasn't perfect

-- air bubbles were a problem -- but they now had a cribbage board about three times the normal size.

Mr. Gervais could see it fine.

Then they made another. A little better this time. Then they seized on an idea: couldn't all hospitals and nursing homes -- anywhere the visually or mobility impaired found themselves -- use one of these?

So was born BYG Games, made from their initials, but describing their product perfectly.

Mr. Gervais, now the sales manager, was soon on the telephone with the east-end Home Depot, ordering four-by-eight sheets of fibreboard, but cut to specifications. Here, remember, is a man with no legs and not enough vision to read a newspaper.

They worked angles. They bought a router and negotiated with a hospital employee to do the edging and drilling.

They ordered golf tees by the thousands to act as pegs. Through the grace of volunteer drivers, paint arrived, and aerosol cans of lacquer and varnish. Mr. Baker worked up more graphic designs and discovered self-adhesive paper, which worked much better than applied glue.

BYG Games added product lines, tic-tac-toe and games called HI-Q and 9 Man Morris, a total of six or seven. Mr. Yelle, nicknamed the "slave driver," was the production boss. Mr. Gervais, meanwhile, kept working the phones. Mr. Baker, self-taught with computers, designed his first website: www.webruler.com/byggames.

Word began to spread. Orders began trickling in from staff members, other hospitals and nursing homes.

It is no easy feat for three men in wheelchairs to run a small manufacturing firm out of a complex care hospital. But the institution bent over backwards. It gave them a special telephone extension to receive calls and, for safety's sake, moved the spray painting into a maintenance workshop.

It allowed the trio to store stock in an activity room. It created a business bank account, with access within the building.

It is hardly an avalanche, but sales are marching on. About 30 cribbage boards have been sold, at \$60

each. The Ottawa Police Association, reports Mr. Gervais, recently placed a \$700 order for games for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

Mr. Baker began getting craftier with graphics. While the CHEO games are adorned with the trademark bear, the cribbage games can be personalized with a logo or a photo of a loved one.

Mr. Gervais says every hospital in Ottawa now has some of their products, as well as many nursing homes.

The revenue generation was being overshadowed by something else. The men now had a reason to get up in the morning, and real connections to the outside world.

"We didn't really do this for the money. We did it for the self-esteem, to give ourselves some purpose in life," said Mr. Baker. "You know, to be honest. I saw two of my friends wasting away, with nothing to do all day."

Mr. Gervais admits that, before BYG, he was feeling so bleak he had thoughts of suicide. "I had no purpose in life. I couldn't see. I couldn't walk. It took two people to lift me on the (toilet)."

(Indeed. Kevin Babulic, the unit manager in the complex continuing care program, describes the change in the men's attitude with one word: "Amazing. Amazing.")

Ever the operator, Mr. Gervais is looking for a corporate sponsor who might make a bulk purchase -- 100 of each of the games -- for a mercy shipment to Afghanistan, where they might be handed out by Canadian soldiers.

"There's no end to it, I'll be honest with you," said Mr. Gervais. "I'm amazed at how far we've gone with it."

Contact Kelly Egan at 726-5896 or by e-mail, kegan@thecitizen.canwest.com

The Ottawa Citizen

Turkey is the best ally of the U.S. for Iraq

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A15

Section: News

Byline: Ayse Heinbecker

Source: The Ottawa Citizen

Re: Turkey isn't a friend of U.S. in Mideast, Oct. 22.

Letter-writer Natalie Macleod claims that Turkey is not a friend of the United States because Turkey did not join in the Iraq war.

Are Canada, Germany, France and a host of other NATO allies also not friends of the U.S. for the same reason? Iraq was and still is the wrong war for the U.S. Like Canada, Turkey did not want to see a good ally such as the U.S. get itself into a morally wrong war. In spite of that decision, Turkey continued to give logistical support to the U.S. through the use of an airbase in its country. That is why Turkey is the best ally of the U.S. in the Mideast. The airbase is vital so the American military needs are met in Iraq.

Turkey is also a very important NATO ally in Afghanistan, keeping close to 2,000 Turkish soldiers there in active duty. Ask Canada's Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier if Turkey is a good ally or not? I'm sure he would say yes.

Turkey volunteered its soldiers for peacekeeping duty in Lebanon last summer at the end of the Lebanon war and they are still serving there. Israel and Turkey have very close military and trade ties.

President George W. Bush and the U.S. media gave their support to the government of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan leading up to the recent elections. If the U.S. administration thought Turkey was not a friend, it would not have supported Erdogan. President Bush also supports fully Turkey's admission to the European Union. Enemies of Turkey would like these close ties to be broken.

Ayse Heinbecker,

Ottawa

English News Service

Xinhua world news summary at 0830 GMT, Oct. 24

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Xinhua world news summary at 0830 GMT, Oct. 24

RABAT -- French President Nicolas Sarkozy has invited heads of states and governments concerned to meet in France in June 2008 for the creation of a Mediterranean Union, said reports from the northern Moroccan port city of Tangier Tuesday.

The organization would be "a political, economic and cultural union founded on the principles of strict equality," said Sarkozy, who is on a three-day official visit to the north African country.

The French president said that he would consult all the leaders of the countries bordering the Mediterranean on the conference agenda and brief them on his 10 concrete projects.
(Morocco-France-Mediterranean Union)

RIGA -- Latvia's center-right government led by Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis Tuesday survived a vote of no-confidence brought by opposition lawmakers over the sacking of top anti-corruption investigator.

The vote failed with 38 lawmakers voting for the no-confidence measure and 56 voting against it. One lawmaker abstained, and five were absent in the 100-seat assembly.

Prime Minister Kalvitis' four-party coalition was harshly criticized for its decision to suspend anti-corruption bureau chief Aleksejs Loskutovs.
(Latvia-No- confidence Vote)

KABUL -- Afghan security forces have captured a suspected Taliban militant in Afghanistan's northwest Badghis province, a statement of Afghanistan National Security Directorate said on Wednesday.

"Our personnel captured a Taliban terrorist Mullah Sarajudin from Abi Kamar district of Badghis province," said the statement released here.

However, it did not mention the exact date of his capture. (Afghanistan- Capture-Taliban)

ANTANANARIVO -- Madagascan former prime minister Jacques Sylla was elected here on Tuesday as president of the National Assembly, lower house of the parliament.

He won by 123 out of 124 votes in the 127-seat National Assembly, which convened its first meeting following the national legislative election last month.

As traditional practice, the eldest and youngest members of the house presided over the meeting before the new president was elected.
(Madagascar-PM- Parliament)

The Windsor Star

Goodbye Ford, hello Afghanistan

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A1 / FRONT

Section: News

Byline: Dalsion Chen

Source: Windsor Star

Illustrations: Colour Photo: Special to The Windsor Star / OVERSEAS: Windsor-born Trooper Jack Bennett is a gunner in Afghanistan.

Photo: Special to The Windsor Star / UNDER FIRE: Trooper Jack Bennett said there have been rocket attacks every day in the Panjwai district in Kandahar province. The sign says it's been zero days without a rocket attack.

There's a big difference between having a plum job at the Windsor Casting Plant and manning a tank in one of the most battle-scarred districts of Afghanistan -- but that's the trade Trooper Jack Bennett decided to make.

"I quit Ford Motor Company to join the army," said the 36-year-old Windsor native cheerfully. "My wife wasn't too thrilled to give up all that money."

Bennett said he'd been at the plant which closed in May, for 12 years and worked his way up to production manager when he suddenly packed it all in to join the regular forces of the Canadian army.

"I just felt compelled to do something, you know? I was happy with my job, I loved it. But I always dreamt about being in the military," said Bennett.

"And with all that stuff that happened with 9-11.... Instead of just sitting around talking about it, I wanted to actually go and do something."

Bennett said he had no previous military experience when he signed up for basic training about three years ago. "Just air cadets as a kid, and that was it."

But Bennett's father, Windsor resident Jack Bennett Sr., said he wasn't shocked when his son told him what he wanted to do. "Actually, it didn't surprise me a bit. He likes adventure," Bennett Sr. said. "He wasn't getting enough adventure, I guess."

Asked if he thinks his son's decision was radical, Bennett Sr. replied: "Not for Jack, really.... He wanted something that's going to be there for the rest of his life. I think he wants to retire with the military. And he couldn't see any future in the factory."

Bennett Sr. said his son finally sold his house on Matchette Road just last year.

Now a Royal Canadian Dragoon, Bennett is on 18 days' leave at his new home at CFB Petawawa after serving two months of his first tour in Afghanistan -- a stint that has already seen him endure intense combat in the insurgent heartland of Panjwai district in Kandahar province.

"The environment is rough," Bennett said. "We got hit by an IED (improvised explosive device) my first week there. We've had rocket attacks every day that we've been there, so far. It's been crazy."

Thankfully, Bennett has some protection: Canada's

new Leopard 2A6M tank. Acquired earlier this year, it's an updated version of what has been Canada's main battle tank since the late 70s. According to Bennett, he and 15 other soldiers are the first Dragoons to take the new tanks to war. "It's kind of cool, making history and all."

As a tank gunner, Bennett's duty is to aim and fire the tank's 120 millimetre cannon. "It's exhilarating, that's for sure," he admits. "But usually, when I'm firing it, we're getting fired on. So it happens so quick, right? I just follow the orders of my commander and do what I'm told."

Bennett said that along with a more powerful, longer range gun, the new tanks have stronger armour, better sights, "and it's a lot more comfortable, too."

But sometimes all that's not enough. According to Bennett, one of Canada's most recent losses -- Cpl. Nathan Hornburg of the King's Own Calgary Regiment -- was killed by mortar fire last month while trying to replace a track on a Dragoon tank.

"He was helping repair our tank," Bennett said. "That's when he got hit.... I knew the guy. He was a good guy. The day before, he was talking about going on leave with his girlfriend and going to see all his family. It was kind of tough."

Despite the dangers of his job, Bennett is plain about his dislike for the talk on Parliament Hill about withdrawing Canadian forces from Afghanistan.

"I think we'd be foolish to pull out now," he said.

"The differences that I've seen since I've been there, it's amazing. The area that we're at, when our troops first arrived, there wasn't a woman, child, or a farmer in a field -- nothing. Now, there are farmers farming their fields again. The kids are waving to us in the streets. Women are walking out in public because they feel safe that we're there."

Bennett said he doesn't blame the Afghan people for being reluctant to side with Canadian troops, as they must live with the fear "that they're just going to be left stranded there."

"Politics is weird. Politics plays so much into this, it drives me nuts sometimes," Bennett said. "We're just starting to make a difference. The Afghan people are just starting to trust us. And if we keep talking about pulling out, we'll never earn their trust and we'll never win this."

Bennett boards a plane Nov. 3 to serve the remaining four months of his Afghanistan tour.

Kyodo News International

Kyodo news summary -4-

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Dateline: TOKYO

Australia imposes financial sanctions on Myanmar

SYDNEY - Australia has imposed financial sanctions on Myanmar, following the military government's brutal quashing of mass antigovernment protests last month, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Wednesday.

The financial sanctions target 418 senior government and military officials, and prohibit the transfer of funds between Australia and Myanmar.

U.N. envoy Gambari to visit Japan from Thurs. on Myanmar issue

TOKYO - U.N. special envoy Ibrahim Gambari will make a three-day visit to Japan from Thursday to meet Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura and other senior Japanese officials on Friday to discuss the Myanmar situation, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

As U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's special adviser, Gambari is in the region to coordinate efforts among key players to address ongoing human rights concerns and resolve the current crisis in Myanmar. He has so far met officials in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and China.

High scores for basic knowledge, lower for applied: national exam

TOKYO - Sixth-grade elementary school pupils and third-year junior high school students in Japan got generally high marks in basic knowledge but lower marks in applied skills in mathematics and the Japanese language, the education ministry said Wednesday, based on the outcome of a nationwide achievement test in April.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology said it saw an improvement in education in terms of knowledge in the first comprehensive exam in 43 years, but that challenges remain in the application of knowledge.

Fujimori to admit to 4 charges for lesser penalty

RIO DE JANEIRO - In an about-face, former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori is expected to basically admit charges against him in four cases carrying relatively light penalties, his chief lawyer told Kyodo News on Tuesday.

Fujimori had previously said he is not guilty of any of the charges against him. His change of stance is perceived as a legal strategy to seek reduced sentences for the lighter crimes while focusing on proving his innocence with regard to the more serious ones, which include two counts of murder.

Moriya to be summoned as sworn witness at Diet on Monday

TOKYO - Scandal-tainted former Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya will be summoned to the Diet as a sworn witness on Monday afternoon, the House of Representatives special committee on prevention of terrorism decided unanimously Wednesday.

Ruling and opposition parties also agreed in a meeting of the committee's executives to hold question-and-answer sessions Friday and next Tuesday with Cabinet members on a government bill aimed at continuing Japan's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in support of U.S.-led antiterrorism operations in and near Afghanistan.

Philadelphia Inquirer

Worldview | On the brink of a blunder?;áRecent White House rhetoric suggests a decision may have been made to invade Iran. But the main threat to the U.S. lies in Pakistan.

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Inq Col Trudy Rubin
Byline: By Trudy Rubin

Hold on to your seats, ladies and gentlemen. It sounds like the president and vice president are planning a war with Iran.

Never mind that our military is overstretched by two ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Never mind that our latest National Intelligence Estimate says the main threat to our homeland lies with al-Qaeda, whose leaders and bases are in Pakistan.

I'll repeat. The main threat lies in Pakistan, which already has nuclear weapons, and whose political scene is being shaken by foreign and home-grown jihadis.

Never mind all that. Last week, Messrs. Bush and Cheney ratcheted up their rhetoric to such a pitch it suggested a decision had been taken on military action. For the sake of our national security - and our national sanity - I hope I'm wrong. But the latest White House words about Iran bear an uncanny resemblance to the 2003 case for the war in Iraq.

The message from the top is that Iran's support for terrorism and its nuclear program present an imminent threat to America and the world. On Oct. 17, President Bush told the media that the way to avoid "World War III" was to prevent Iran "from having the knowledge needed to make a nuclear weapon." U.S. intelligence agencies believe it will be several years before Iran has the ability to make a weapon, but the president's pledge to foreclose the necessary "knowledge" advances the time frame for action to before the end of his term.

In a one-two verbal punch, Vice President Cheney railed against Iran Saturday as a "terror-supporting" state that had "direct involvement in the killing of Americans." Then he upped the ante. Going beyond previous statements, he made this flat-out commitment: "We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon." Put that together with Bush's words, and it sounds like preemption, soon.

How familiar the tone. Cheney's words harked back to January 2003, when he said we wouldn't "permit a brutal dictator" with terrorist ties and weapons of mass destruction "to dominate the Middle East and threaten the United States." Cheney magnified the imminence of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and distorted its nature. And now comes Iran.

It's no secret Cheney wants military action against Tehran. There has been strong pushback from Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, and from Pentagon brass. They recognize another Mideast war

could lead to catastrophe. As Adm. Mike Mullen, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said to the New York Times this week: "We have to be incredibly thoughtful about . . . getting into a conflict with a third country in that part of the world." He meant Iran.

Mullen knows a bombing strike against Iran would have terrible reverberations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as on oil prices. It would bolster radicals throughout the Mideast and the Muslim world. And - here's the crux - most experts doubt an air strike on Iranian facilities would end Iran's nuclear program. Instead, they think it would strengthen Iran's hardest-liners, and ensure they pursued a nuclear program with more zeal.

As for the Iranian threat, I'm sure the military is far more realistic than the White House about its nature. No one wants to see an Iran with nuclear weapons, which is why Europe and Washington are pushing for tighter economic sanctions against Tehran.

But Iran is a third-world country, whose faltering economy, despite oil, is only around the size of Greece or Argentina. Iran's Shiite sect and Persian ethnicity are disdained by most Arabs. Iran can cause trouble in the Middle East, but it isn't going to take over the region - or the world.

As for the threatening rhetoric of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad toward Israel, Iran's military is controlled by its top clerics. Their worldly interest in their vast wealth makes it unlikely they would commit suicide by attacking the Jewish state.

What's so astonishing is that Cheney seems to have learned nothing from his 2003 folly. He has the same advisors and consults the same experts who were so wrong about Iraq. In Cheney's Saturday speech, he cited Princeton professor Bernard Lewis, who wrote last year in the Wall Street Journal that an apocalyptic Iran was poised to destroy Israel on Aug. 22, 2006. I kid you not.

We know how unprepared this administration was for the post-invasion of Iraq and its unexpected consequences. The latest general to spell this out was Ricardo Sanchez, the former U.S. commander there, who denounced the "catastrophically flawed, unrealistically optimistic war plan" for Iraq.

Can Bush and Cheney really be leading us down the same path in Iran?

Contact columnist Trudy Rubin at 215-854-5823 or

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<http://go.philly.com/trudyrubin>.

Agence France Presse (English)

More rebels said killed in new Afghan fighting

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: International News
Dateline: KABUL
Time: 07:46:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

KABUL, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - Several militants were killed in a new burst of fighting near Kabul, while the Taliban killed an Afghan man because he worked for the US-led coalition, officials said Wednesday.

AFP 240746 GMT 10 07

© 2007 AFP

The new fighting in Wardak province, which adjoins Kabul, follows heavy battles there Monday that the Afghan army said killed between 12 and 20 militants but a local official said left 13 civilians dead.

"During an operation to disrupt extremist activities in the Wardak province late Tuesday evening, several militants were killed in a firefight with coalition forces and two militants were detained," the force said.

The fighting was in Nerkh area, about 30 kilometres (20 miles) southwest of Kabul, in an area "where intelligence sources indicated militant forces were hiding," it said in a statement.

The separate International Security Assistance Force led by NATO has said it is looking into claims that civilians were killed Monday in fighting in nearby Jalrez but it had no reports of such casualties.

The area is close to Kabul but considered too dangerous for journalists to travel there to independently confirm events.

Wardak is where a German engineer was kidnapped on July 18 and held with five Afghan colleagues for three months before being freed last month.

One of the Afghans told AFP afterwards that his captors had links with the extremist Taliban movement and were involved in suicide bombings in the capital.

The Taliban were in government between 1996 and 2001 when they were removed in an invasion led by the United States. The militia has regrouped to wage an insurgency that is said to be supported by Al-Qaeda "jihadists."

The hardliners have killed several Afghans who work with international forces here, which are helping the government of President Hamid Karzai.

On Tuesday, Taliban killed a man returning home from work with a militia employed by the coalition to help with security in Paktia province, deputy provincial police chief Farouq Sangari said.

strs-br/tha/jw

Afghanistan-unrest

Agence France Presse (English)

Pakistan deploys 2,000 soldiers to troubled northwest

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: International News
Dateline: ISLAMABAD
Time: 07:34:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

ISLAMABAD, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - Pakistan has deployed more than 2,000 troops to a troubled northwestern district to bolster efforts to stem rising violence linked to pro-Taliban militants, a senior official said Wednesday.

Paramilitary troops erected barricades and checkpoints in the scenic Swat valley, where a pro-Taliban militant group has been blamed for a series of recent bloody attacks on police and government leaders, the official said.

"We have deployed a little over 2,000 troops to assist police and civil administration in the district," top military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad told AFP.

The district in the conservative North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan has become a stronghold of banned radical group Tahreek Nifaz-e-Shariat Mohammadi (TNSM), which has close ties to Taliban militants.

Arshad said the deployment was to tackle threats to law and order by TNSM gangs operating in the area.

"It is not a military operation and the exercise is aimed at improving the law and order situation," he said.

Four paramilitary soldiers were injured late Tuesday when a roadside bomb planted by militants ripped through their convoy at Chakdara town in Swat, Arshad said.

TNSM was banned by President Pervez Musharraf in 2002 after it sent more than 10,000 volunteers to fight in Afghanistan against US forces who led an invasion to oust the country's hardline Taliban regime.

Hundreds of Taliban militants have since fled over the border into Pakistan's nearby tribal areas where they are said to be regrouping.

Around 90,000 Pakistani troops are deployed in the lawless tribal zones where they have been waging battle against Al-Qaeda and Taliban-linked extremists.

rj/tha/jw

Pakistan-Afghanistan-unrest-military-deploy

AFP 240734 GMT 10 07

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Agence France Presse (English)

AFP 0700 GMT News Advisory

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Notes, News Advertisement
Dateline: PARIS
Time: 07:14:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

PARIS, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - Duty Editor: Adam Plowright

Tel: (33) 1 40 41 46 36

TOP STORIES

- + Mass evacuations in California
- + Global rallies against Myanmar regime
- + Turkey security chiefs meet on Iraq
- + US to press NATO allies

US-fires,newseries

LOS ANGELES

More than half a million people across California are ordered to evacuate as wildfires rage for a third day, destroying nearly 1,300 buildings and threatening to overwhelm firefighters.

750 words 0800 GMT by Rob Woollard. Graphic, picture.

Myanmar-unrest-China-protest,lea d

BANGKOK

Myanmar dissidents protest outside the Chinese embassy in Bangkok to demand freedom for Aung San Suu Kyi, kicking off a day of rallies around the globe in support of the detained democracy leader.

600 words 0715 GMT by Shino Yuasa. Picture

We will also move:
Myanmar-unrest-UN-Gambari,newsse ries

Turkey-Kurds-unrest

ANKARA

Turkey's civilian and military leaders meet to discuss measures against Kurdish separatists holed up in neighbouring northern Iraq as the Baghdad government orders a crackdown on the rebels to appease Ankara.

600 words 0930 GMT by Hande Culpan. Picture.

NATO-unrest

NOORDWIJK, Netherlands

The United States is expected to press its European allies to provide more troops and equipment to combat the insurgency in Afghanistan as a two-day meeting of NATO defence ministers opens in the Netherlands.

600 words by Lorne Cook

FILING PLANS BY REGION

-- EUROPE --

France-environment-politics

PARIS

Green campaigners and big business kick off a marathon two-day round-table with the French government aimed at laying the groundwork for an environmental revolution in Europe's third-biggest economy.

600 words 0930 GMT

-- AMERICAS --

US-fires-politics-Bush,newseries

WASHINGTON

Sharply criticized for his slow response for the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster, President George W. Bush moved quickly to assert a leading role in efforts to combat wildfires in California by announcing a visit to the affected area.

550 words 0730 GMT

Myanmar-unrest-UN-Gambari,newsse ries

UNITED NATIONS

Bowing to international pressure, Myanmar's rulers agree to bring forward to early November a return visit by UN mediator Ibrahim Gambari.

750 words moved by Gerard Aziakou

-- ASIA --

China-space-moon,lead

BEIJING

Asia's space race heats up as China prepares for a prime-time launch of its first lunar orbiter, an event being seen in the world's most populous nation as a sign of its global rise.

650 words 0730 GMT by Robert J. Saiget. Picture, graphic. Launch at 1000 GMT

Japan-auto-technology-sector,lead-WRAP

CHIBA, Japan

Zany concept vehicles, fuel efficient hybrids and muscular supercars vie for attention as the Tokyo Motor Show opens with Japanese automakers eager to revive moribund domestic sales

650 words 0800 GMT by Daniel Rook. Picture

afp

News-Advisory

AFP 240714 GMT 10 07

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Agence France Presse (English)

US asks Japan to keep Indian Ocean mission

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: International News
Dateline: TOKYO
Time: 06:46:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

TOKYO, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - The US ambassador here called on Japan Wednesday to maintain support for forces in Afghanistan, saying that ending the mission would hurt its alliance with Washington and send a bad message to the world.

AFP 240646 GMT 10 07

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The opposition has vowed to bring home ships in the Indian Ocean providing fuel and other support to US-led forces, arguing that officially pacifist Japan should not be part of "American wars."

The legislation allowing Japan's participation in the "war on terror" is set to expire next week, making it unlikely for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's government to be able to continue the mission uninterrupted.

"If the mission stops, the impact on our bilateral relationship would be regrettable. It will be hard to make an argument that it's strengthened," US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer told reporters.

Although the United States would "respect whatever decision" Japan makes, Tokyo has "to decide what role it will play in the international community," Schieffer said.

"The discontinuation of the mission would send a bad signal to the rest of the international community, and I hope that's not the message Japan will wind up sending," he said.

Fukuda took over last month from outspoken conservative Shinzo Abe, who cited the opposition's refusal to extend the mission as a reason for resigning.

Fukuda and Abe argue that Japan, despite its pacifist post-World War II constitution, needs to play a greater role in international security befitting the world's second largest economy.

Opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa contends the mission is unconstitutional. Ozawa, who has himself long advocated revising the constitution, is famed for his political acumen and is pressing Fukuda to call early elections.

"There has to be a realisation that there are some people who are not going to be satisfied for political reasons," said Schieffer, who had a testy meeting with Ozawa after the opposition won control of one house of parliament in July.

kdf/sct/jw

Japan-US-military-diplomacy-Afghanistan

Kyodo News International

11 envoys to meet Japan lawmakers, rally support for refueling bill

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Dateline: TOKYO

Ambassadors to Japan from 11 nations will hold a meeting with Japanese lawmakers next Wednesday in Tokyo to lobby opposition lawmakers to support a bill that would enable Japan to continue refueling support for U.S.-led antiterrorism operations in and around Afghanistan, diplomats said Wednesday.

During the planned meeting at the Canadian Embassy, the ambassadors from the United States, Britain, Pakistan and eight other countries will brief Japanese lawmakers about the antiterrorism effort called Operation Enduring Freedom and maritime interdiction activities in the Indian Ocean, the diplomats said.

Senior officers from Britain's Royal Navy engaged in such activities will speak about actual operations and the significance of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling support for U.S. Navy and other coalition ships.

The top diplomats, representing Afghanistan, Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United States, will answer questions from Japanese lawmakers.

U.S. Ambassador Thomas Schieffer does not plan to make many comments at the meeting so that the lawmakers will not get the impression that the fueling activities are meant to solely support the United States, a diplomatic source said.

The meeting is scheduled to start at 7:30 p.m. to avoid affecting Diet-related schedules. On Tuesday, the House of Representatives began deliberations the government bill for a new law to replace the Nov. 1 expiring special law that authorizes the refueling mission.

In late September, ambassadors and senior diplomats to Japan from the 11 countries met at the Pakistani Embassy and urged Tokyo to continue its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean.

"The members of the coalition acknowledge and greatly appreciate Japan's support in this regard and hope that Japan will continue its important contribution," they said in a statement, calling Japan's refueling mission "unique and vital."

Kyodo News International

Pakistan deploys 2,500 troops to militant stronghold in northwest

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Dateline: ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has deployed 2,500 paramilitary troops to the country's northwest ahead of an operation against militants, a Defense Ministry spokesman said Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. Wahid Arshad told reporters the troops were deployed in the Swat district in Northwest Frontier Province to combat rising militancy.

Tight security measures have been enforced in the district in NWFP bordering Afghanistan, about 135 kilometers northwest of Islamabad.

Reports said all entrance and exit points of Mangora, the main city in the district, have been closed and helicopters were hovering over the city.

The paramilitary troops have been deployed at the airport and the mountains overlooking the city, the reports said.

The Associated Press quoted the army as saying the deployment would curb the activities of Maulana Fazlullah, a militant leader who reportedly has used radio broadcasts to call for a jihad, or holy war, against Pakistani authorities.

Shams-ul-Mulk, caretaker chief minister of the province, said an operation by the troops is under way.

The Defense Ministry, meanwhile, said an army convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device in Swat and four army personnel were injured.

Northwestern Pakistan is made up of NWFP and six tribal agencies governed by tribal customs and regulations exclusively applied to them.

The country's tribal areas have been in the grip of militants for several years.

Kyodo News International

LEAD: Moriya to be summoned as sworn witness at Diet on Monday

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Dateline: TOKYO

(Editors: ADDING INFO)

Scandal-tainted former Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya will be summoned to the Diet as a sworn witness on Monday afternoon, the House of Representatives special committee on prevention of terrorism decided unanimously Wednesday.

Ruling and opposition parties also agreed in a meeting of the committee's executives to hold question-and-answer sessions Friday and next Tuesday with Cabinet members on a government bill aimed at continuing Japan's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in support of U.S.-led antiterrorism operations in and near Afghanistan.

Moriya has been criticized for his cozy ties with a former executive of defense equipment trading house Yamada Corp., with whom the former top defense bureaucrat played golf even after such associations were prohibited under an intra-ministry rule in April 2000.

"Naturally, I think it all comes down to him (Moriya) steadily establishing accountability in response to all these doubts presented from all quarters," Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura told a press conference.

In addition to Moriya's case, the Defense Ministry has come under fire for the mishandling of information about the amount of oil Japan supplied to the United States in a 2003 refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and the discarding of a logbook of the Maritime Self-Defense Force supply ship engaged in the mission.

Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Tuesday that Moriya has admitted to having played golf with the ex-Yamada executive after April 2000, and called on him to voluntarily return his retirement allowance to take responsibility for the issue.

Moriya, who held the ministry's top bureaucratic post from August 2003 to August this year, has told ministry officials investigating the matter that he continued playing golf with the businessman until the fall last year, Ishiba said.

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has urged Ishiba to get to the bottom of the series of scandals involving the Defense Ministry, to punish those involved and to take effective preventative measures.

English News Service

Pak-Afghan jirga to promote peace in region: Pakistani minister

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Pak-Afghan jirga to promote peace in region:
Pakistani minister

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 24 (Xinhua) -- Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao said Wednesday the Pak-Afghan grand jirga commission would help promote bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Speaking at a program of the state-run PTV channel, Sherpao disclosed that a meeting of the Pak-Afghan jirga commission has decided to hold a small jirga in the first week of November.

An Afghan delegation came to Pakistan on Tuesday to attend the meeting and conveyed the names of 25 delegates for the small jirga, which would decide dates about the grand jirga, expected to be held after the general elections in Pakistan, Sherpao said.

The two sides decided at the meeting that they would expedite the ongoing process of dialogue for peace and reconciliation with oppositions.

The first meeting of the Pak-Afghan Peace Jirga was held in Kabul in August this year, in which both the sides recognized the fact that terrorism was a common threat to both countries and the war on terror should continue to be an integral part of the national policies and security strategies of both countries.

The minister said talks were held with opposition groups in Afghanistan to find a way to numerous issues after the meeting of the grand jirga commission in Kabul.

The jirga was working to expand the process of talks with oppositions to promote peace in Afghanistan which would have a positive impact on the region.

The small jirga was formed to oversee the pace of progress on decisions made at the grand jirga. The establishment of jirga commission would help in creating an environment of goodwill between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Sherpao added.

No adverse statements were issued from any side after the meeting of the commission, Sherpao said, adding that people to people contact had increased between the two countries and there was better understanding on various issues.

Kyodo News International

FEATURE: Myanmar Internet radio underpins democracy movement

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Byline: Mariko Yasumoto
Dateline: TOKYO

In just one year, a Tokyo-based group of Myanmar democracy activists has increased its presence among their peers back home, along with its Myanmar audio news program on the Internet.

One Saturday evening in October, Than Swe, president of the Burma Democratic Action group, and some of its members gathered in an apartment in Tokyo's bustling Takadanobaba district to work on their weekly online program "Maykha Internet Radio."

One of their main tasks was to call and interview activists, who remain in the forefront of its movement in Myanmar, and ask for their opinion on the recent developments there in the aftermath of the ruling junta's brutal clampdown on protesters in Yangon in late September.

"This is an editor from Maykha Internet Radio. Can I talk to you now?" said Lay Lay, a 43-year-old editor for the program, calling to a leading member of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, who criticized the junta's recent move to draw up a new constitution.

The group also interviewed that evening a renowned filmmaker who was just released from jail the previous week. He explained to the BDA that the water was badly contaminated at the prison and damaged his liver.

The phone interview is the highlight for the online program, which also contains up-to-date information on the democracy movement in Myanmar, reactions from in and outside the country, events in the world, and songs for democracy -- none of which are readily available in the reclusive nation.

The BDA, formed in 2003, is one of the few Myanmar organizations in Japan that provide an Internet audio broadcast service in their language. Since the launch in October 2006, the group has produced 55 installments for the program.

In addition to the radio, the BDA has also published since 2004 a monthly magazine with a distribution of about 800 copies around the world using its own network that can get past the junta's censor system.

The BDA members usually meet around 6 p.m. on Saturdays and stay overnight in the apartment. Their work sometimes lasts until Sunday night.

"It is indeed hard work, but this is nothing compared to the situation facing our compatriots in Myanmar, who are literally fighting at the risk of their lives, and we spare no effort to support them," said Kyaw Sunn Tun, a 43-year-old executive member.

Experts on Myanmar affairs say their activity in Japan could give a huge impetus and have the potential power to influence the overall movement.

Hisao Tanabe, one of the founders of People's Forum on Burma, a nongovernmental organization in Japan, said, "People in Myanmar are often frustrated with the lack of information, and Myanmar news service from abroad is a vital source of information for them."

Commenting on Maykha in particular, he said, "The program is spearheaded by grass-roots activists, which is a big difference from major radio broadcasters like BBC Burmese, and people in Myanmar are greatly encouraged by seeing such activists struggling for them."

Kei Nemoto, professor in Burmese history at Sophia University, agreed with Tanabe. "The fact that many activists overseas have not given up and are still fighting provides considerable moral support to the locals," he said.

Maykha, which is the name of a river in Myanmar, has steadily gained recognition in Myanmar and the military junta is keeping tabs on its movement and seeking a chance of interfering with its activity.

The members are thus cautious in interviewing, as pro-junta spies may pretend that they are interviewers from Maykha and try to obtain information on the activists' side.

The BDA not just provides information but also gets news from activists who are occasionally at the center of chaos. During the September clashes between security forces and protesters, digital photos from inside of the uproar were sent to the BDA.

The members also receive antigovernment books and reports from activists that were not allowed to be published in Myanmar. The BDA distributes the books to the world on their behalf.

While activists in Myanmar stake their lives to pursue democracy, Swe and other Myanmar refugees in Japan have also undergone countless hardships after barely escaping alive.

Swe, 45, arrived in Japan in November 1989, a year after he led an antigovernment demonstration in Yangon, previously known as Rangoon, which ballooned into a huge pro-democracy uprising involving ordinary citizens across the South Asian nation.

Getting blacklisted as a high-profile political dissident, the native of Rangoon knew that he would never be able to return home.

His father died at age 69 in 2001 without being able to see his son ever again after being arrested four times by the military, which was desperate to locate him.

"Still, I had to leave Burma as I have the responsibility of keeping on the fight," said Swe, who would have suffered years of detentions and torture if he had remained in Myanmar. Two of his friends have died in jail.

Leaving families and friends is one of the hardships most political refugees have to go through. "I could not stop crying when she died," said Lay, whose mother abruptly died in 1994, four years after she left.

Since the military junta's crackdown in late September, many of the 150 or so BDA members are out of their workplaces almost every day to stage rallies and demonstrations mainly in Tokyo. Because of that, some of them already lost their jobs and others are on the verge of losing them.

The death of a Japanese video journalist, Kenji Nagai, who was shot down by junta forces during the September rally, has sent shock waves through the Myanmar community in Japan, triggering more protests.

"It is outrageous that Mr. Nagai lost his life in Burma after surviving in more dangerous zones like Iraq and Afghanistan," said Ko Ko Aung, director of the Democratic Federation of Burma's Japan branch, who had known Nagai for more than two years.

Whatever difficulties they may face in the future, Swe said, "We will definitely continue our fight for democracy until the military government is overthrown and we see peace and democracy in our country."

For its upcoming projects, the group is looking to start an online visual news program in November and has spent everything they have to purchase a professional video camera.

Kyodo News International

Japanese editorial excerpts

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Dateline: TOKYO

Selected editorial excerpts from the Japanese press:

DPJ MUST SUBMIT OWN ANTITERROR BILL SOON (The Daily Yomiuri as translated from the Yomiuri Shimbun)

An essential question to be explored in relation to Japan's contribution to the global fight against terrorism is what kind of role this country should play in this regard, with its national interests in mind.

On Tuesday, the House of Representatives started discussions on a bill drawn up to replace the current Antiterrorism Law, which will expire on Nov. 1. The new legislation is aimed at enabling the continuance of the Maritime Self- Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean.

The opposition camp raised questions about collusive ties between former Administrative Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya and a defense equipment trading company, as well as suspicions that the fuel provided by the MSDF to U. S. vessels in the Indian Ocean may also have been used for activities related to U.S. military operations in Iraq.

The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan should not be allowed to boycott discussions on the bill just by insisting on the need to uncover the truth behind the scandal.

The DPJ's alternative for the government bill is said to comprise support unrelated to military purposes, including food production, medical services and a reform of the police system in Afghanistan--to the exclusion of an SDF dispatch.

DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama said if his party's plan includes the SDF dispatch, "it will be almost impossible to form a consensus within the party." His argument should be dismissed as preposterous.

Some DPJ members have insisted on putting off submitting their party's own bill until next year's ordinary Diet session. They defend their idea by saying presenting the DPJ's proposal would mean playing into the ruling camp's hands. This attitude must be seen as a mere self-serving parliamentary tactic.

We doubt whether the DPJ is truly trying to become a political party that can think and act responsibly.

(Oct. 24)

Kyodo News International

U.S. editorial excerpts -4-

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Dateline: NEW YORK

Selected editorial excerpts from the U.S. press:

A MEDAL OF HONOR (The Wall Street Journal, New York)

Yesterday President Bush presented the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor for valor in combat, to the family of Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy, a Navy SEAL who was killed in Afghanistan in 2005. It is the third Medal of Honor bestowed in the war on terror, and all have been awarded posthumously.

Lt. Murphy, of Patchogue on Long Island in New York, was the 29-year-old officer-in-charge of a four-man SEAL reconnaissance team tasked with capturing or killing a high-ranking Taliban leader in the Hindu Kush mountains, east of Asadabad behind enemy lines. A group of goat herders betrayed their position to the Taliban, and the team came under a heavy coordinated assault by dozens of insurgents, perhaps as many as 100.

The SEALs were at a tactical disadvantage and became pinned down in a ravine. Lt. Murphy, already wounded, moved out from behind cover, seeking open air for a radio signal to place a rescue call. He was shot several more times in the back. He dropped the transmitter, picked it back up and completed the call, and then rejoined the fight.

The battle, the last stage of Operation Redwing, was the worst single day of casualties for Naval Special Warfare since World War II.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military is almost spoiled for choice when it comes to such instances of heroism and sacrifice. It is regrettable that these volunteers are too often rewarded with indifference by the U.S. political culture, where "supporting the troops" becomes nothing more than a slogan when there is a score to settle. The representative men in this war are soldiers like Lt. Murphy.

(Oct. 23)

The Windsor Star

Cruise meets fans at Afghan-themed film

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: C8

Section: Entertainment

Column: Roll Call

Dateline: LONDON

Source: Star News Services

LONDON - Film star Tom Cruise spent more than two hours signing autographs and greeting fans in London on Monday at the world premiere of his new movie Lions for Lambs, Hollywood's latest examination of U.S. foreign policy.

Lions for Lambs, which follows a slew of films related to the war in Iraq and the U.S. military response to the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, is about two soldiers serving in Afghanistan and political intrigue back in the United States.

The Windsor Star

Principal says no to yellow ribbon on locker

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A9

Section: Editorial/Opinion

Byline: Callie Rose

Source: Windsor Star

I'm a high school student. The other day, I asked my principal if I could put a yellow ribbon around my locker to show support for our troops in Afghanistan.

I was told that I could not do that because it might upset the students who don't feel the same way I do.

I think as a Canadian that I have the right to wish our troops well and hope they come home safe.

The reason we are over there is because we're fighting for freedom and everyone should be wishing for the troops to come home safely. I think that any student who wishes to do put a ribbon on their locker should be able to do so.

CALLIE ROSE

LaSalle

The Windsor Star

Too many footnotes, too little research

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: A8
Section: Editorial/Opinion
Byline: Bob Bergen
Column: Guest Column
Source: Special to The Windsor Star

One day, a good book is going to be written about how Canada became enmeshed in the war in southern Afghanistan.

Sadly, the new book *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar*, by Liberal sympathizers Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang, isn't it.

It is difficult to know where to begin criticism of this apology for the Liberal governments which first committed Canada to Afghanistan.

But, the early days of John McCallum's appointment as defence minister in May 2002, by then-prime minister Jean Chretien eight months after 9-11 are as good as any to start.

It leads off with the authors describing McCallum's first few weeks on the job hardly hearing anything from his military advisers about Afghanistan, discussing instead more money for defence, maritime helicopters, transport aircraft and the U.S. ballistic missile defence system.

It wasn't until June 28, one month after McCallum had taken office, that then-Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Ray Henault briefed the minister and told him he would receive a diplomatic note from the United States for a renewed Canadian military presence in Afghanistan. Somehow, this is portrayed as the military's fault.

What is wrong with the defence minister showing leadership on Afghanistan and demanding briefings on the biggest military mission Canada would be involved in since the Korean War?

For those who don't know about this field, it's called civil-military relations and involves the informed oversight of military forces by elected civilians.

Clearly, although *The Unexpected War* doesn't put it this way, there was precious-little informed oversight taking place by the Liberals in Ottawa.

McCallum had no idea what challenges Afghanistan presented and decided that he had to travel to Afghanistan to learn, but his generals were apparently opposed.

Astoundingly, it was Sasha Trudeau, son of Prime Minister Pierre, who told him: "You're the minister, tell them you are going," which he then did.

That the generals are portrayed as a gang of bullies should come as no surprise given that Lang, one of its authors, was McCallum's chief of staff at the time.

Bill Graham fared no better as the new defence minister in 2004 when defence officials "failed" to brief him on the recommended location for the Canadian Provincial Construction Team in Kandahar.

And who was Graham's chief of staff? Lang, who apparently had learned nothing from his two years with McCallum.

Indeed, when there is any mention of McCallum's chief of staff, he is referred to in the third person.

It gets worse. The book describes McCallum's first meeting with U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who it says would become synonymous with "arrogance, intransigence, misguided policy and military failure."

Then it elaborates on Rumsfeld's "astonishing ignorance of counterinsurgency and the strategies and tactics" they use.

How about Liberal gang's own astonishing ignorance?

Almost begrudging respect is paid to the intellect and skill of current Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier, who it says, single-handedly bamboozled the best minds in Ottawa into adopting Canada's international policy statement.

That should come as no surprise, given that Lang was quoted in *The Globe and Mail* on Aug. 10, 2006, saying: "The problem is, there isn't anyone who can take him (Hillier) on with a counter world view. He blows them away."

The problem wasn't Hillier: the problem was the Liberals.

The book's arguments about a lack of detail from "officials" about the merits of ballistic missile defence and a "staggering inability to articulate what BMD was" are backed with a litany of footnotes. But, the footnotes don't reference original documents to back up the claims that a meticulously researched work would.

One of the final insults comes after it quotes Lang's former boss, Graham, who said in an interview on Jan. 30, 2007: "There is no doubt about it. We've watched this mission evolve differently from when we got into it."

The book then says: "Most important, any

government owes its citizens a clear, compelling, and honest explanation of why its soldiers are fighting and dying."

That's true, but it is also gratuitous.

A good time to explain to Canadians why its soldiers were fighting and dying would have been during the summer of 2005 when Graham and Hillier agreed to tour Canada talking about "what the mission meant for Canada, why it was the right mission, what Canada would be doing for the people of Afghanistan and how the mission would be dangerous for the Canadian Forces."

On Sept. 23, 2005, newspapers were awash in stories quoting Graham warning Canadians of the perils of the dangers of Kandahar.

In the end, if I had to pick the most-upsetting part about reading this self-serving diatribe, it would be knowing that I paid \$33.39 to do it.

Bob Bergen is a research fellow with the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute in Calgary. The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. Learn more about the CDFAI and its research on the Internet at www.cdfai.org.

Firefight typical of clashes with Taliban

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A2

Section: News

Byline: Finbarr O'Reilly

Dateline: HOWZ-E-MADAD, Afghanistan

Source: Reuters

Illustrations: Black & White Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / CANADIAN SOLDIERS IN ACTION YESTERDAY: A Canadian soldier, centre, is on the move while under fire as an Afghan soldier provides cover after their position was hit by Taliban shells.

Black & White Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Master Corporal Frank Flibotte, left, helps a wounded fellow Canadian from the NATO-led coalition retreat under fire after his position was hit by Taliban shells during an ambush in Kandahar province's Zhari district yesterday.

Black & White Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Major Jean-Sebastien Fortin of Canada manoeuvres while under fire yesterday. One Canadian soldier was lightly wounded and an Afghan soldier was shot in the shoulder.

Black & White Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Master Corporal Frank Flibotte of Canada jumps from the roof of a mud house.

HOWZ-E-MADAD, Afghanistan - The explosion of the shell against a mud wall in a field of grapevines sent the Canadian soldier crouched behind it flying backwards.

[rocket-propelled grenades] and 82-millimetre recoilless rifles," Maj. Fortin said.

"It's not finished," he said. "I'm just glad our guy was OK."

Blood spilling from his nose and mouth, the stunned man crawled for shelter through swirling smoke and dust as comrades laid down covering fire and moved toward him.

Under fire from Taliban insurgents, Canadian Master Corporal Frank Flibotte and Major Jean-Sebastien Fortin attended to the wounded soldier, helping him to his feet and supporting him as he staggered into an armoured RG-31 vehicle that had raced to the scene.

Canadian forces from the NATO-led coalition and Afghan National Army troops clashed with Taliban insurgents at Howz-e-Madad in the Zhari district of Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province yesterday in a battle typical of the conflict gripping the country's southern region bordering Pakistan.

The Canadian soldier, who did not want his name published, was only lightly wounded. An Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier was shot in the shoulder during heavy fighting that lasted several hours and was airlifted by helicopter to Kandahar Airfield for emergency treatment.

There was no confirmation of any Taliban killed or wounded, though three suspected fighters were detained for questioning.

The operation between ANA and Canadian forces was meant to be a raid on a mud compound near the main highway "The Taliban attack from this place every two days or so, hitting civilian trucks and our supply convoys," Maj. Fortin said.

"What we wanted to do was disrupt them by setting a trap, but we were compromised and took heavy fire and had to pull back."

The Canadians called in armoured support from its Quick Reaction Force, consisting of more than a dozen armoured vehicles, while U.S. Humvees and U.S. Rangers also provided backup.

"They used mounted machineguns, RPGs

The Leader-Post (Regina)

Rendition: a history

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: B6

Section: Viewpoints

Byline: Daniel Benjamin

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Source: The Los Angeles Times; Washington Post News Service

WASHINGTON -- With hearings in Congress, legal cases bouncing up to the Supreme Court and complaints from Canada and America's European allies, the issue of rendition is everywhere. There's even a new, eponymously titled movie in a theatre near you, starring Reese Witherspoon as a bereft wife whose innocent husband gets kidnapped and Meryl Streep as the frosty CIA chief who ordered the snatch. Like most covert actions and much of the war on al-Qaida, the practice is shrouded in mystery -- and, increasingly, the suspicion that it's synonymous with torture and lawlessness.

In fact, the term "rendition" in the counterterrorism context means nothing more than moving someone from one country to another, outside the formal process of extradition. For the CIA, rendition is a key tool for getting terrorists from places where they're causing trouble to places where they can't. The problem is where these people are taken and what happens to them when they get there. As a former director for counterterrorism policy on the National Security Council staff, I've been involved with the issue of rendition for nearly a decade -- and some of the myths surrounding it need to be cleared up.

1. Rendition is something the Bush administration cooked up.

Nope. George W. Bush was still struggling to coax oil out of the ground when the United States "rendered to justice" its first suspect from abroad. In 1987, President Ronald Reagan authorized an operation that lured Lebanese hijacker Fawaz Younis to a boat off the coast of Cyprus, where FBI agents arrested him. (Younis had participated in the 1985 hijacking of a Jordanian plane and was implicated in the hijacking of TWA Flight 847, which left a U.S. Navy diver dead.) President George H.W. Bush approved the kidnapping in 1990 of Mexican physician Humberto Alvarez Machain, who was believed to be involved in the torture and killing of a Drug Enforcement Administration official. Nothing says that renditions can involve only suspected terrorists; Israel's abduction of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Argentina in 1960 could be called a rendition, though the term was not yet in use.

Beginning in 1995, the Clinton administration turned up the speed with a full-fledged program to use rendition to disrupt terrorist plotting abroad.

According to former director of central intelligence George J. Tenet, about 70 renditions were carried out before Sept. 11, 2001, most of them during the Clinton years.

2. People who are "rendered" inevitably end up in a foreign slammer

-- or worse.

Actually, that's not a foregone conclusion. Alvarez was brought to the United States. So was Mir Aimal Kansi, who killed two CIA employees in their cars outside the agency's Langley headquarters in 1993, and Ramzi Yousef, the architect of the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. Both were apprehended in Pakistan, whose leaders decided that the nation would rather not have those two -- folk heroes to some -- sitting in jail, awaiting extradition. Pakistan's leaders feared that co-operating with the United States would be dangerously unpopular, so they wanted the suspects out of the country quickly. For many pro-U.S. Muslim leaders, that concern has only deepened as anti-Americanism has soared.

By my count, most renditions since 1995 have involved moving individuals from one foreign country to another -- not grabbing someone in Washington and carting them off to North Africa, as happens to Witherspoon's onscreen husband. Such operations typically occur in secret because, again, Muslim leaders (especially in the Arab world) want to shield their co-operation with Washington from their anti-American publics.

The CIA has acted as a go-between, arranging the transfers and providing transportation. Usually those being rendered are not brought to the United States because, while the U.S. government may have an abundance of intelligence showing their malfeasance, it doesn't have enough courtroom evidence. There's a big difference between the two.

One other safeguard: During the Clinton years, the United States required the country that received a rendered person to have some kind of legal process against the suspect -- an arrest warrant or indictment, for example. It's not clear whether that is still the case. Perhaps Michael Mukasey, President Bush's attorney general nominee, can check.

3. Step one of a rendition involves kidnapping the suspect.

The individual may feel as though he's being kidnapped, but that's not usually what's going on. Most of the time, the person is detained by the authorities of the country he is in. They will then hand him off to the CIA, which will fly him to his destination.

In rare cases when the country of residence is a hostile one, an "extraordinary rendition" can be carried out: a covert effort to abduct the suspect and spirit him out of the country. The CIA put considerable time into efforts to capture Osama bin Laden this way from Taliban-ruled Afghanistan in the late 1990s. Had it worked, it would have been an extraordinary rendition -- and Americans would have cheered.

4. Rendition is just a euphemism for outsourcing torture.

Well, not historically. The guidelines for Clinton-era renditions required that subjects could be sent only to countries where they were not likely to be tortured -- countries that gave assurances to that effect and whose compliance was monitored by the State Department and the intelligence community. It's impossible to be certain that those standards were upheld every time, but serious efforts were made to see that they were. At a minimum, countries with indisputably lousy human rights records (say, Syria) were off-limits. Another key difference: Renditions before Bush were carried out to disrupt terrorist activity, not to gather intelligence or to interrogate individuals.

Now, though, the Bush team seems to have dramatically eroded such safeguards. The administration has apparently sent someone to Syria, and Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen, was evidently grabbed in Macedonia and interrogated in Afghanistan in a manner that sure sounds like torture.

In light of this and other revelations, the criticism that the administration has "defined down" torture looks pretty persuasive. It's probably a good bet that Congress or the next administration will reform the program, or abolish it outright.

5. Pretty much anyone -- including U.S. citizens and green card holders -- can be rendered these days.

Not so, although the movie *Rendition* -- in which Witherspoon's Egyptian-born husband gets the black-hood treatment and is yanked from a U.S. airport and taken to a North African chamber of horrors -- is bound to spread this myth. A "U.S. person" (citizen or legal resident) has constitutional protections against being removed from the country through rendition, and there have been no incidents to suggest the contrary. In fairness, though, the ghastly case of Maher Arar -- a Syrian-born Canadian citizen who convincingly says he was detained at New York's JFK Airport, handed off to Syria and tortured -- is way too close for comfort.

- Benjamin, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, served on the NSC staff from 1994 to 1999. He is the co-author of *The Next Attack: The Failure of the Global War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting It Right*.

The Canadian Press - Broadcast News

NATO-Cda-Afghan

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: General And National News

NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands -- Defence Minister Peter MacKay will

be facing some tough questions today as he meets with his NATO

counterparts in the Netherlands.

While other countries are signing on to have soldiers serve

additional time in Afghanistan, MacKay will have to tell the

ministers that Canada is still trying to decide what to do.

A committee headed up by former Liberal cabinet minister John

Manley is reviewing Canada's position in the war-torn country and is

expected to make recommendations on whether the army should pull out

by 2009.

In the recent throne speech, the conservatives said they'd like to

extend the mission mandate in the country until 2011.

Canada currently has 25-hundred troops serving in the volatile

Kandahar province.

Seventy-one soldiers have died while serving in the country since

2002.

Other countries in the NATO coalition, such as the Netherlands and

Germany, have already agreed to keep their troops in Afghanistan.

(The Canadian Press)

mmq

Agence France Presse (English)

President of Iraqi Kurdish region urges end to rebellion

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: International News
Dateline: ARBIL
Time: 08:07:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

ARBIL, Iraq, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - The president of Iraq's northern Kurdish region on Wednesday urged the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to end its more than two-decade armed struggle against Turkey.

"We call upon the PKK to eliminate violence and armed struggle as a mode of operation," said a sternly worded four-point statement issued by the office of Massud Barzani, president of the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq.

"We do not accept in any way, based on our commitment to the Iraqi constitution, the use of Iraqi territories, including the territories of the Kurdistan region, as a base to threaten the security of neighbouring countries."

The statement, issued after Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Tuesday ordered a crackdown on PKK offices, said the Kurdish government opposed the use of violence as a "doctrine" and method to achieve political objectives.

"We condemn all terrorist activities from any party because the people of Kurdistan itself are victims of terrorism," the Kurdish presidency said.

It called upon the PKK to adhere to its ceasefire call and not "resort to armed operations."

The PKK, which has been fighting for a self-rule in southeastern Turkey since 1984, has offered a conditional ceasefire if Ankara drops plans to launch a military incursion into northern Iraq to flush out the rebels.

"We have always struggled for the sake of peace, democracy, development and stability for our people and peoples of the region. We are in fact in a bitter and continued state of struggle against terrorism," the statement said.

The presidency declared the four-point statement to be the firm policy of "the people of Kurdistan."

"We reiterate that we endeavour to build friendly relations with the people of the region and we share a commitment to good neighbourly relations with all," it added.

"We have always called for peace and security and we believe that the outstanding problems can be solved only through dialogue and understanding."

On Tuesday after meeting visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan Maliki ordered that offices of the PKK be closed, saying the rebel group was a "bad

terrorist organisation."

The PKK largely operates clandestinely through local social groups in the three northern Iraqi Kurdish provinces of Sulaimaniyah, Arbil and Dohuk.

Wednesday's statement from Barzani's office is a meltdown from his hardline position of a few days ago.

On Sunday, both Barzani and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, also a Kurd, had expressed an inability to hand over rebel leaders present in northern Iraq to Turkey.

Barzani also said the Kurdish administration will "defend" its land in the event of an attack by Ankara.

Babacan, meanwhile, used his high-profile visit to reassure Iraq that Turkey wants a diplomatic solution to the problem of Kurdish rebel bases.

"Politics, dialogue, diplomacy, culture and economy are the measures to deal with this crisis," the Turkish minister said in Baghdad.

"We do not want to sacrifice our cultural and economic relations with Iraq for the sake of a terror organisation," he said, referring to the PKK.

But Babacan also rejected the truce offer made by the PKK.

On Tuesday, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan maintained during a visit to London that Ankara had still not ruled out military action, which was sanctioned by parliament last week.

Erdogan had also raised the possibility of joint action with the United States against PKK bases inside Iraq.

Washington downplayed the talk of joint military operations but said it may provide Turkey with intelligence to help its armed forces strike Kurdish rebels based in Iraq.

The United States, which uses the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey to supply its forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, fears that any unilateral military action by Turkey could wreck efforts to stabilise Iraq.

bur-jds/srm

Turkey-Kurds-unrest-Iraq

AFP 240807 GMT 10 07

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The Daily Telegraph

'The most dangerous job in the world' Bomb disposal experts rarely get to tell their story. Cassandra Jardine talks to a 'Felix' who defeated the best efforts of Iraqi bombers

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 028

Section: Features

Byline: Cassandra Jardine

Chris Hunter says he sleeps well. For four months in Iraq he did what he calls "the most dangerous job in the world in the most dangerous place in the world" but, meeting him now, you would scarcely believe that he hadn't taken up his alternative career choice and become a restaurateur.

Bomb disposal experts are known in the army as "Felix" because they are like cats with nine lives and Hunter is certainly a cool cat. He has written his memoirs, *Eight Lives Down*, under an assumed name and he lives under tight security for fear of reprisals from jihadists who have much to pay him back for, yet he claims that his only worry is how to pay his mortgage on the house near Hay-on-Wye.

In a world full of macho heroes, Hunter, 34, appears to be an oddity. He's a man with a Queen's Award for Gallantry who considers what he did to be almost a routine technical job. His citation is neatly filed away with his young daughters' school reports, but to read it is to be transported to a world far from the green, rolling hills of Herefordshire, to his four months in southern Iraq in 2004, an experience so "outrageous" that he laughs with incredulity when he thinks back over it.

The citation mentions his selfless devotion to duty, to the way he gave no thought to personal danger as he took those long, lonely walks across open ground to defuse bombs - despite the constant risk of being picked off by a sniper. He didn't bother to wear body armour, it says, because it hampered him, made him less effective. His efforts saved thousands of lives. Later, when he moved into intelligence gathering, he was instrumental in disabling a whole bomb factory. He treats it as all in a day's work.

"I wouldn't say I was blasé about danger," he says, "but it becomes second nature. I never felt scared as I walked up to a bomb. I would break out in a sweat and my mind would be racing but that's just the adrenaline, I couldn't control it. The really hard bit was operating in the heat."

He's been reliving those days in writing the book, which is probably unique. Bomb disposal experts have never told their stories before, because it puts them in too much danger. "It used to be because of the IRA; now it's the Islamists," he says. "The Arabs are incredibly dignified people, but they take revenge very seriously." I hope they read his book because it may make them think again.

Hunter is no gung-ho Rambo type, he's a man who

believes it is his duty - as it was his father's before him - to save innocent lives. The moments that touched him most were his encounters with Iraqis. He's scarred by the memory of the man who beat his pregnant wife in front of him because she had inadvertently shown her face to British soldiers. And he remains haunted by the girl whose throat was cut by her father for the dishonour of talking to squaddies.

But he was also deeply moved by the men, women and children who thanked him for saving their lives. "When you've been to somewhere a bomb has exploded and seen the carnage it causes, and then the next day been able to prevent that happening again, you do think you are doing humanitarian work. People say that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter and I've some sympathy with that view. But when someone plants a bomb with the intention of injuring civilians, I don't think that is ever justified. Maybe we could stop them by giving in to what they want, but the current government guys wouldn't subscribe to that, so you have to mitigate the threat."

People go into bomb disposal for three reasons, he believes: atonement, duty and "the buzz". He pleads guilty to all three. He says he was atoning for the minor-sounding sin of "having too many girlfriends" - before he met his wife Lucy. The duty he felt was to continue the work that his father had done (but rarely spoke of) during the Second World War. And the buzz? "For me it was about standing on the edge, wondering: 'Do I go in or don't I?' and 'What course of action do I take?' When you start the long walk towards a bomb, suddenly you are on your own, totally focused. I miss that. The only reason I got out was for my family."

Iraq was the pinnacle of his 17 years in the Army. He joined, aged 16, picking a career in intelligence initially because he was asked at his interview: "Do you want to be James Bond?" Of course, he replied "Absolutely" and then spent the next two years in a language laboratory learning Russian. After that he sat, feeling bored, at a desk. It was only when he was commissioned and sent to Sandhurst that he found his calling. Watching a bomb disposal expert at work he thought: "I could do that."

Two hundred exams, and many psychological tests later - designed to weed out the risk-taking hero types - he was allowed to make the first of many lonely "long walks" while others stood back in case, this time, the bomb exploded before he could cut through

the wires or shave the explosive away from the detonator. He served in Northern Ireland, Colombia, and Afghanistan, but his four months in Basra were more dangerous than the previous 10 years put together.

The work was non-stop and the conditions horrendous. Every day there was another bomb at a roadside or under a bridge to defuse or disable. Each time a mixture of his level head, experience and luck allowed him to save the day. Soon, he was such a well-known enemy of the Shia militia that he became the target himself. "We were neutralising expensive rockets at such an astonishing rate that it was costing them money and making them look foolish," he says, "and getting lots of forensic evidence that helped us identify who was planting the bombs and where they were getting their equipment from. That's why they wanted to get me.

"I knew something strange was going on because every time we rocked up to defuse something there would be a television crew and a crowd of spectators. They were waiting to see me blown up. I knew for certain that this was the plan when they planted a car bomb outside a Sunni hospital. Other soldiers had gone up to the car and it hadn't gone off, so I knew it was meant for me. They had booby trapped it - which bomb-makers don't often do because it is more dangerous for them."

Ideally, he would send in a robot or disable it himself. Failing that, he would fire a water-filled missile to explode the shell but without detonating the bomb. In this case, all he could do was clear the hospital and then let the robot set it off. No lives were lost but Hunter had become a liability. He was promoted to major and given a desk job hunting down the bombers. He was spectacularly successful, but it wasn't the work he loved most. And by then he knew the time had come to put his marriage first.

He knows he was lucky to escape with a deaf ear, a bullet hole in his leg and scarring from broken glass on his hands. Two colleagues had their legs blown off and have begun a long, slow recovery. He also doesn't mind having only been paid pounds 32,000 a year for a job that meant risking his life daily, but he wishes there was more recognition in Britain for the sacrifices soldiers make.

"The year after I left Iraq I went to Washington. I walked into a bar wearing my medals and everyone stood up and cheered. I thought the President must be behind me, but it was me they were cheering. Being British I was both touched and embarrassed."

In January he left the army. Now he's slowly returning to civilian life, making a living out of counter-intelligence consultancy and writing more books, fiction and non-fiction, about his work.

"Psychologically, I would say I have no issues. My wife told me I screamed in the night last week, but I didn't register any dreams."

Perhaps it's not just toughness, but the sense he did a job that was unequivocally worth doing that allows

him to remain such a calm and happy man. * *Eight Lives Down* by Chris Hunter (Bantam) is available for pounds 15.99 + pounds 1.25 p&p. To order please call Telegraph Books on 0870 428 4112 or visit www.books.telegraph.co.uk

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The Daily Telegraph

Ready for war

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 025

Section: Features

SIR - BAE Systems has won an order to supply 600 mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles to the US Marine Corps (Business, October 22).

These vehicles are to provide protection from land mines and roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Should not our own troops be supplied with them as well?

John Watkins

Hevingham, Norfolk

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The Daily Telegraph

Why should we feel sympathy for suicide bombers?

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 023

Section: Features

Byline: JAN MOIR, ON WEDNESDAY

Next week, a television thriller called *Britz*, about a brother and sister, who are both British-born and Muslim, will depict how they are pulled in different directions by their conflicting experiences in post-9/11 Britain. He is an ambitious law undergraduate who signs up with MI5; she is a medical student who becomes increasingly alienated and angered by Britain's foreign policy. So far, so very dramatic, although some have already voiced disquiet at the version of events depicted in the film. The clear political message is that the war on terror has alienated the Muslim community: one young woman is so traumatised she commits suicide, while another British Muslim is tortured by British intelligence officials. In a pivotal scene, a suicide bomber accuses the British people of complicity in the butchery of innocent Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Lebanon. The author Andrew Anthony, whose book *The Fall-Out* charts how he lost his own Left-leaning liberalism in the wake of 9/11, has already pointed out that the film shows unrepresentative extremes and Britain has no troops in Palestine or Lebanon, for a start. Sympathy for the suicide bombers? Why does it always have to be like this in drama?

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Times Colonist (Victoria)

We're all equal under the law -- until we're not

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: A16
Section: Comment
Byline: Iain Hunter
Column: Iain Hunter
Source: Special to Times Colonist

One of the most fundamental duties of a national government, as Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin of the Supreme Court of Canada has declared, is to provide for the security of its citizens.

But she and her court found in February that some of the ways our national governments have decided to protect us go too far in denying suspected terrorists rights guaranteed all of us by the charter.

The way some people reacted, it sounded as if the court had thrown out the entire procedure of security certificates, which involve secret evidence being produced in secret against people suspected of being a security threat without their being able to mount a defence based on all the evidence alleged against them.

It did no such thing. Indeed, it suggested strongly to the government of the day what changes in procedure it has to make to keep the process in place as a constitutionally acceptable one.

This week, the Harper government indicated it's taking the court's advice -- the bare minimum it reckons it can get away with. Individuals deemed by agents of the state to pose security threats still are to be subjected to secret trials without being told what they're alleged to have done or why they're alleged to have done it.

Everyone in Canada may be equal under the law, as our Constitution says -- until they're suspected for reasons that they may never know. There's still to be a two-tier system of justice in the land, one for us and one for "them."

It's not easy to see how it could be otherwise when national security is at stake. If there's the slightest chance that, based on evidence and not mere suspicion, certain individuals in Canada could be targeted by terrorists or members of the public selected for destruction or harm at random by a suicide bomber, extra powers of arrest, detention and deportation where appropriate are warranted.

Where there's information vital to the security of this country and its people -- names of undercover agents serving Canada, evidence of possible security weaknesses -- it has to be possible to keep it secret, during judicial hearings, from those who could use it to threaten our security.

"The right to a fair hearing comprises the right to a hearing before an independent and impartial magistrate who must decide on the facts and the law, the right to know the case put against one, and the

right to answer that case," the court said in February.

The law provides for a review of security certificates, signed by two cabinet ministers, by a federal court judge: If the court finds them reasonable, those named in them are detained if permanent residents, or subject to deportation if foreign nationals. There's no appeal.

Nothing unconstitutional about that, the Supreme Court said. But "the secrecy required" in the hearing means those named in certificates don't have the information necessary to challenge the government's case against them.

This means the ability of the judge to come to a decision "based on all the relevant facts and law" lacks "the full and independent powers to gather evidence" that they need.

The Supreme Court's solution, if the suspect can't have the necessary information, is to find "a substantial substitute" for that information. It suggested the provision of "an independent agent" would meet the test.

Accordingly, the government proposes a procedure based on the British model where "special advocates" would be provided to represent suspects at security certificate hearings who would have special clearance to see secret material and the information necessary to challenge allegations by the government.

But these advocates would not be chosen by the suspects, but selected from a list of lawyers drawn up by the justice minister. Knowing the way legal business is handed out to firms selected by parties taking office after elections, and dumped by parties who defeat them, knowing the way politics can intrude even in the selection of judges, this shouldn't impress us that much.

And the advocates will have to ask the judge's permission, after seeing classified evidence, before consulting his or her "client."

This arrangement, which seems to satisfy the Supreme Court, is already under attack in Britain, where there have been recent terrorist incidents.

No terrorist bombs have gone off in Canada, and it should be possible, six years after 9/11, and now that we're supposed to have carried the terrorist war to the enemy in Afghanistan, to come up with a better balance between national security and the rights of those deemed to pose a threat to it.

It may never be possible to deal with suspected terrorists as suspected criminals. Terrorists are a breed apart.

But Maher Arar has shown us what mere suspicion by faceless agents of government can do. Suspicion should be eliminated in our courts, not guarded.

cruachan@shaw.ca

The Canadian Press - Broadcast News

TOR OUT YYY

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: General And National News

The Harper government's throne speech faces its final hurdle today in the Commons.

But the speech, outlining the priorities of the minority Conservative government, is expected to pass when M-P's vote on it for the last time.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has said his party will abstain from the vote to ensure its passage.

Among other things, it outlines how the Tory government expects Canada to fail to keep its Kyoto commitments to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

It also calls for an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan to 2011. (2)

(NATO-Cda-Afghan) (Audio: 05)

Defence Minister Peter MacKay will face some tough questions in the Netherlands, where he's meeting with his NATO counterparts today.

While other countries are signing on to have their soldiers serve additional time in Afghanistan, MacKay will have to admit that Canada is still trying to decide what to do beyond our 2009 mandate.

He's waiting on a report from a committee studying a possible mission extension.

Canada has 25-hundred troops in southern Afghanistan.

Seventy-one have died since 2002. (2)

(Flaherty-Taxes)

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty is denying a report he'll announce significant tax cuts in next month's fiscal update.

He insists he has no plans for breaks until the next federal budget, expected in March.

Flaherty was reacting to a National Post report that the Harper government plans to turn November's economic update into a mini-budget stuffed with tax cuts.

It cited Tory sources as saying the move is aimed at forcing the Liberals to vote against it and trigger an election while the Tories hold a 10-point lead in the polls. (2)

(Calif-Fires)

Fire crews in Southern California say they can do little more than wait out wildfires that have already had a hand in five deaths, charred 16-hundred square

kilometres and destroyed 13-hundred homes.

Unrelenting desert winds have whipped the fires into an unstoppable frenzy.

A half-(m) million people have been chased from their homes from north of Los Angeles down beyond San Diego.

U-S President Bush is due to visit the stricken area tomorrow. (2)

(Halifax-Cat-Bylaw)

Big changes are coming for cat owners in Halifax.

Regional councillors have voted in favour of a controversial pet bylaw that will restrict the movement of cats.

Starting in April, all animal owners will have to register all pets, and cats must be kept confined to their owners' properties.

Any felines found roaming around may be trapped and sent to the municipal shelter. (2)

(Shuttle)

The shuttle crew is awake, as Discovery continues to close in on the international space station.

Tomorrow's scheduled docking will set up one of the most challenging space-station construction missions yet.

It will involve a record five spacewalks.

During their week-and-a-half-long station visit, astronauts will install a live-in compartment they're bringing along. (2)

(NewsWatch by Karen Rebot)

The Canadian Press - Broadcast News

NATIONAL Audio 3:45 a.m. ET 24-10-07

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Audio Schedules

01 - (The Canadian Press-Business Minute)

TORONTO (Neena Chowdhury) 60s. The Canadian Press Business Minute. (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (345a)

02 - (BIZ-Loonie)

TORONTO (Neena Chowdhury) 33s. This week's roller-coaster fluctuations aside, analysts say the loonie will likely continue showing strong growth. (SOURCE: The Canadian Press) (345a)

03 - (BIZ-Dollar-Consumers)

OTTAWA. x--06s. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty says he's buying the argument from retailers that it'll take time to cut in-store prices to reflect the strength of the Canadian dollar. After meeting with some big retail chains yesterday, Flaherty says he's at least seeing movement in the right direction.

(`...that is down.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (345a)

TAG: Flaherty says both businesses and consumers must do their part in ensuring there aren't significant gaps between the prices for identical goods in Canada and U-S, just because of the border.

04 - (Throne-Speech-Vote)

OTTAWA. x--16s. The Harper government's throne speech faces its final hurdle today in the House of Commons. Canadian Press reporter Terry Pedwell says the speech, outlining the priorities of the minority Conservative government, is expected to pass when members of Parliament vote on it for the last time.

(`...avoid an election.") (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (345a)

TAG: Among other things, the speech outlines how the Tory government expects Canada to fail to keep its international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto protocol. It also calls for an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan to 2011, from the current timetable ending in February, 2009.

05 - (Cda-Afghan-NATO)

AMSTERDAM (Murray Brewster) 31s. With wavering European allies signalling they're prepared to stick it out in Afghanistan, Defence Minister Peter MacKay will likely find himself in an uncomfortable spot today as meets with his NATO counterparts. (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (345a)

06 - (Girls-Race-Fight)

MONTREAL (Peter Ray) 34s. Two of four girls charged with assault after a 14-year-old Montreal High school student was beaten up appear in youth court today. (WA) (SOURCE:The Canadian Press) (345a)

(more)

The Canadian Press

Rice calls Iran a major obstacle to US vision in the Middle East

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Foreign General News
Byline: BY ANNE FLAHERTY

WASHINGTON _ Iran is a major obstacle to the U.S. vision of a Middle East in which nations will "trade more, invest more, talk more and work more constructively to solve problems," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says.

"The Iranian government is pursuing policies which are detrimental to the long-term interests of its neighbors, of the region, and of the Iranian people themselves. It need not be this way," Rice said in remarks prepared for delivery Wednesday to a panel in the House of Representatives.

The Associated Press obtained a copy of her testimony.

Rice's testimony, before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, comes amid increased frustration by Republicans and Democrats alike that the Bush administration is not doing enough to deter Iran's nuclear activities, which they fear are aimed at developing weapons. Iran says its program is only for power generation and other peaceful purposes.

Last month, by a 397-16 vote, the house passed legislation aimed at blocking foreign investment in Iran, in particular its lucrative energy sector.

The bill, sponsored by Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos, a Democrat from California, would specifically bar the president from waiving U.S. sanctions.

Rice said the administration shares Congress' goal of making sanctions tougher on Iran, but urged caution.

"We simply want to be certain that our collective efforts do not undermine our multilateral strategy, where we will have a maximum chance of success," she said.

President George W. Bush says a U.S.-linked missile defense system is urgently needed in Europe to protect against a potential Iranian strike. Plans for such a system have strained U.S. relations with Russia, which estimates Iran's capability to be less mature and has close financial ties with Tehran.

On Tuesday, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said the Bush administration has told Moscow it may delay activation of the system until it has proof that Iran poses a missile threat.

"We would consider tying together activation of the sites in Poland and the Czech Republic with definitive proof of the threat _ in other words, Iranian missile testing and so on," Gates said.

Rice planned to tell the House committee Wednesday

that in addition to nuclear ambitions that undermine stability in the region, Tehran has provided "lethal assistance" to extremist groups in Lebanon, Afghanistan and the Palestinian territories, as well as Iraq.

In particular, she noted, activities in Iraq by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds force "are inconsistent with the Iranian government's obligations and stated commitment to support the Iraqi government."

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The Toronto Star

canadian wounded in taliban ambush

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A01

Section: News

Illustrations: FINBARR O'REILLY reuters A wounded soldier scrambles for cover seconds after being ambushed by Taliban insurgents, who shelled the position held by Canadian and Afghan forces in the Zhari district of Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan yesterday. The soldier was not identified. An Afghan National Army soldier was also wounded in the attack. Stories, A24-25

FINBARR O'REILLY reuters A wounded soldier scrambles for cover seconds after being ambushed by Taliban insurgents, who shelled the position held by Canadian and Afghan forces in the Zhari district of Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan yesterday. The soldier was not identified. An Afghan National Army soldier was also wounded in the attack. Stories, A24-25

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The Canadian Press

Pakistan sends 2,500 troops to militant stronghold in northwest

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Foreign General News
Byline: BY SADAQAT JAN

The paramilitary troops deployed Tuesday and were setting up checkpoints across Swat, a mountain valley popular with tourists until violence flared there this summer, army spokesman Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad said.

Militants responded by detonating a remote-controlled bomb near a convoy heading into the valley late Tuesday. Arshad said four soldiers were slightly wounded and security forces had detained seven suspects.

The army said the deployment would curb the activities of Maulana Fazlullah, a militant leader who reportedly has used FM radio broadcasts to call for jihad, or holy war, against Pakistani authorities.

Checkpoints manned jointly by paramilitary Frontier Corps. troops and local police are to "ensure law and order, to assist the civil administration and ensure that Fazlullah and his band of criminals stop terrorizing innocent civilians," Arshad said.

The army already sent regular troops into Swat, which lies about 50 kilometers north of the city of Peshawar in July as part of a crackdown on militancy spreading across the region.

The deployment prompted a string of deadly bombings and suicide attacks on security forces in the region.

Arshad warned militants to surrender or face tough action.

"It will be perhaps better for them if they desist from their activities and turn themselves over to the law enforcement agencies," he said.

Fazlullah is the leader of Tehrik Nifaz-e-Sharia Mohammed, or TNSM, a pro-Taliban militant group which sent thousands of volunteers to Afghanistan during the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

Pakistan banned the group and jailed TNSM's founder, Sufi Muhammad, who is also Fazlullah's father-in-law, in 2002.

However, the group has re-emerged this year in Swat and Malakand, another impoverished, conservative region next to the Afghan border where the government provides few services.

As well as marshaling a band of armed militants, Fazlullah has reportedly used an FM radio station to campaign against girls education and denounce a recent polio vaccination as Western plot to sterilize Muslim children.

Authorities have accused him of links to Islamabad's radical Red Mosque, which was stormed by army commandos in July in an operation that left more than 100 people dead.

That incident and the deployment of army reinforcements to Swat and the North Waziristan region touched off a wave of violence that has killed more than 1,000 people and raised concern about Pakistan's stability.

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, hated by the militants for siding with the U.S. in 2001, recently renewed his pledge to eliminate extremism in Pakistan.

He is widely expected to join forces with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who survived a suicide attack on her return from exile last week, to continue that policy after January parliamentary elections.

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INDEX:Politics

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: National General News

OTTAWA _ The federal throne speech is expected to easily pass its final hurdle today in the House of Commons.

The speech, outlining the priorities of the minority Conservative government, will come up for its last vote in the Commons later today.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has said his party will abstain from the vote to ensure its passage.

NDP Leader Jack Layton says the move effectively gives Prime Minister Stephen Harper majority government status.

And he accuses the Liberals of failing in their duties as Her Majesty's official Opposition merely to avoid going to the polls.

Among other things, the speech outlines how the Tory government expects Canada to fail to keep its international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto protocol.

It also calls for an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan to 2011, from the current timetable ending in February, 2009.

(The Canadian Press)

TAP

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The Canadian Press

Afghan battle kills militants, civilians: officials

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Foreign General News

KABUL _ U.S.-led coalition forces clashed with suspected militants in central Afghanistan, leaving several insurgents dead and detaining two, a statement from the coalition said.

The troops moved into compounds in Nirkh district, in Wardak province late Tuesday after ``intelligence sources indicated militant forces were hiding" there, the statement said.

``During the course of operations, militants opened fire on coalition forces," it said.

The troops returned fire, killing several militants, said Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman.

During a search of the area, the coalition troops discovered weapons, ammunition and explosive materials and also detained two suspected militants for questioning, the statement said.

The clash happened in the same province where on Monday, NATO and Afghan troops called in air strikes during a battle against insurgents that left 20 suspected militants and up to 12 civilians dead, officials said.

In eastern Afghanistan, meanwhile, a NATO soldier was killed and two others wounded Tuesday, the alliance said in a statement.

The casualty figures from the central Afghanistan clash varied widely. Afghan officials said between three and 12 civilians were killed in the fighting Monday in a remote area of Wardak province, just west of the capital Kabul.

NATO's force in Afghanistan said 50 insurgents were trying to set up an ambush and fighter aircraft dropped two bombs on their position.

Spokesman Maj. Charles Anthony said soldiers were investigating the incident to see if civilians had perished.

``We've been looking since yesterday," Anthony said.

``We still have not gotten any evidence of any civilian casualties. I'm not saying it's not possible."

NATO said it killed ``numerous" enemy fighters.

Mohammad Hussein Fahami, deputy head of the Wardak provincial council, said 12 civilians were killed _ eight people from one family and four others. Ten civilians were wounded, he said.

Anthony said soldiers had been on the ground to guide the bombs to their targets. He said ISAF has ``no evidence" the bombs hit a housing compound.

Some 700 civilians have died in fighting this year, by an Associated Press count based on figures from Afghan and western officials. About one-half of those deaths were caused by U.S. and NATO forces.

Maj. Zalmay Khan, an Afghan army commander, said 20 enemy fighters died in the joint NATO-Afghan operation. But a governor's aide, Mohammad Sadiq, said the operation killed 12 fighters and three civilians.

Khan said militants were firing at Afghan and NATO forces from the cover of civilian homes.

Casualty figures from remote battles often vary widely in Afghanistan and are hard to independently verify.

In eastern Afghanistan, an ISAF soldier was killed and two others were wounded during a firefight with insurgents in Kunar province, NATO said in a statement.

Separately, the U.S.-led coalition said one child and five militants were killed in Zabul province Tuesday after militants fired on coalition soldiers from a tent.

Afghanistan this year has seen the heaviest fighting since the 2001 ouster of the Taliban. In all, more than 5,200 people have died in insurgency related violence by the AP count.

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The Canadian Press

Americans deeply skeptical about U.S. foreign policy: poll

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Foreign General News
Byline: BY ALAN FRAM

WASHINGTON _ Fewer Americans think the United States is adequately thwarting terrorists, meeting its objectives in Iraq or achieving other goals overseas, said a poll that shows a deepening skepticism about the country's foreign policy.

The survey also shows people in the United States have flagging hopes a range of strategies and policies _ from improving intelligence operations to showing more respect for other countries _ can do very much to keep the country safe.

"We are reaching a point where the public seems to be questioning not just whether current policies are working but whether the United States can have an effective foreign policy at all," said a report accompanying the survey, conducted in the United States last month for Public Agenda, a non-partisan public policy group, and the journal Foreign Affairs.

The poll also found little taste for a military confrontation with Iran, though there was slightly more interest than earlier this year. Tensions with Tehran have risen over its nuclear program and aid to fighters opposing U.S. troops in Iraq.

Sixty-five per cent said they preferred economic or diplomatic moves against Iran, compared with 19 per cent who favoured military action or threats. When the question was asked in March, 13 per cent chose threatened or actual military steps.

Asked to assign grades to the United States for meeting foreign policy goals, 48 per cent awarded As or Bs for giving terrorism the attention it deserves. The number giving those grades was 10 percentage points lower than when the question was asked in 2005.

Twenty-five per cent gave those highest grades when asked how well the United States is succeeding in Iraq, down 14 points from 2005. There were similar drop-offs in top grades for meeting U.S. objectives in Afghanistan, spreading democracy in the world, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and having good relations with Muslim countries.

While 56 per cent said improved intelligence operations would help a great deal to protect the country, that was down nine points from 2005.

Thirty-eight per cent said respecting other countries more would do a great deal to improve U.S. security, down 11 points in two years. There were similar or slightly smaller reductions in the portion of people saying tighter immigration controls, better space weaponry and reduced energy dependence would help.

By 65 per cent to 28 per cent, people said the United States should rely more on diplomatic and economic efforts, rather than military might, to combat terrorism, numbers that were virtually unchanged from two years ago.

The survey also found:

_ Most think global co-operation can reduce global warming but also doubt the United States can keep other countries from getting nuclear weapons or keep oil supplies stable and reasonably priced.

_ Sixty-four per cent said they think the rest of the world sees the United States negatively, including 30 per cent who said very negatively.

_ Seventy-nine per cent said the world has become more dangerous for the United States.

_ One-quarter said the United States is doing a good or excellent job making the world more peaceful.

_ People ranked the Middle East as the top U.S. foreign policy problem, with four in 10 choosing it.

The telephone survey of 1,011 adults was conducted from Sept. 17-27. It had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.

On the Net:

Public Agenda _ <http://www.publicagenda.org>

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Winnipeg Free Press

A proud graduate and soldier

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: B2

Section: Life

Byline: Nick Martin

GLENN KENNEDY walked into R.B. Russell Vocational High School Tuesday as a recent alumnus -- he walked out as Private Kennedy, Royal Canadian Regiment.

Kennedy said that R.B. Russell was so important to him, to finishing school, to helping him become an artist, and pursue his childhood dream of a military career, that he asked to hold his induction ceremony at the North End school.

"This is where I decided, for once in my life, to finish school here. It's like my home," said the 21-year-old, who came to R.B. Russell two years ago after previously going to school at Bloodvein First Nation.

About two dozen students and some of his former teachers watched as Kennedy swore an oath and signed his final paperwork.

It's only the third time that recruitment officer Maj. Chuck Halikas has conducted a ceremony outside his headquarters, in his third year of signing up new enlistees in Manitoba.

"We're trying to make it a little more mobile," said Halikas, who usually inducts five or six men and women at a time.

Halikas told the group that Kennedy was among 21 potential recruits who just attended a pre-recruit training course for aboriginal young people in B.C. Nine have chosen to enlist.

While there is a lot of paperwork, the ceremony "is an oath, it's a moral contract for Glenn" with the people of Canada, he said.

Kennedy said he's wanted to be a soldier "since I was a kid, about 12. It's travel, and meeting new people.

"It's a career, not a job," said Kennedy, who faces months of basic infantry training which Halikas described as gruelling physical activity.

"I was training myself hard, lost a lot of weight," said Kennedy, who's gone from 226 pounds to 195.

In May alone, he was at the downtown Y 38 times, working out under the membership program that now-retired teacher Brian MacKinnon organized to get R. B. Russell students off the street and into healthy and safe activities.

Kennedy said that he's aware that he could be posted to Afghanistan.

"Sure, I'm ready," he said. "If I ever get the chance,

I'll do some art while I'm over there."

Lorna Derksen, R.B. Russell's employability centre co-ordinator, said that "Glenn came to me a year ago and said, 'this is what I want to do.' It's what he really, really wanted."

Halikas said that the Canadian Forces are conducting "a navy blitz" in Manitoba this week, hoping to alleviate a shortage of technicians by appealing to students who live about as far away from the ocean as Canadians can get.

They'll be at Tec Voc and Morden Collegiate today, and both campuses of Red River College Thursday.

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Winnipeg Free Press

In defence of the term 'Islamofascism'

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: A15
Section: Focus
Byline: Christopher Hitchens

THE attempt by conservative author David Horowitz and his allies to launch "Islamofascism Awareness Week" on American campuses has been met with a variety of responses.

One of these is a challenge to the validity of the term itself. It's quite the done thing, in liberal academic circles, to sneer at any comparison between fascist and jihadist ideology. People like historian Tony Judt write to me to say, in effect, that it's historical and simplistic to do so.

And in some media circles, another kind of reluctance applies: Commentator Alan Colmes thinks that one shouldn't use the word "Islamic" even to designate jihad, because to do so is to risk incriminating an entire religion. He and others don't want to tag Islam even in its most extreme form with a word as hideous as "fascism."

Finally, I have seen and heard it argued that the term is unfair or prejudiced because it isn't applied to any other religion.

Well, that last claim is certainly not true. It was once very common, especially on the left, to prefix the word "fascism" with the word "clerical." This was to recognize the undeniable fact that, from Spain to Croatia to Slovakia, there was a very direct link between fascism and the Roman Catholic Church. More recently, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, editor of the *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*, coined the term "Judeo-Nazi" to describe the Messianic settlers who moved onto the occupied West Bank after 1967. So, there need be no self-pity among Muslims about being "singled out" on this point.

The term "Islamofascism" was first used in 1990 in Britain's Independent newspaper by Scottish writer Malise Ruthven, who was writing about the way in which traditional Arab dictatorships used religious appeals in order to stay in power. I didn't know about this when I employed the term "fascism with an Islamic face" to describe the attack on civil society on Sept. 11, 2001, and to ridicule those who presented the attack as some kind of liberation theology in action. "Fascism with an Islamic face" is meant to summon a dual echo of both Czechoslovakian political leader Alexander Dubcek and American intellectual Susan Sontag (if I do say so myself), and in any case, it can't be used for everyday polemical purposes, so the question remains: Does bin Ladenism or Salafism or whatever we agree to call it have anything in common with fascism?

I think yes.

The most obvious points of comparison would be

these: Both movements are based on a cult of murderous violence that exalts death and destruction and despises the life of the mind. ("Death to the intellect! Long live death!" as Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, an ally of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, so pithily phrased it.) Both are hostile to modernity (except when it comes to the pursuit of weapons) and both are bitterly nostalgic for past empires and lost glories. Both are obsessed with real and imagined "humiliations" and thirsty for revenge. Both are chronically infected with the toxin of anti-Jewish paranoia (interestingly, also, with its milder cousin, anti-Freemason paranoia). Both are inclined to leader worship and to the exclusive stress on the power of one great book. Both have a strong commitment to sexual repression -- especially to the repression of any sexual "deviance" -- and to its counterparts the subordination of the female and contempt for the feminine. Both despise art and literature as symptoms of degeneracy and decadence; both burn books and destroy museums and treasures.

Fascism (and Nazism) also attempted to counterfeit the then-success of the socialist movement by issuing pseudo-socialist and populist appeals. It has been very interesting to observe lately the way in which al-Qaida has been striving to counterfeit and recycle the propaganda of the anti-globalist and green movements.

There isn't a perfect congruence.

Historically, fascism laid great emphasis on glorifying the nation-state and the corporate structure. There isn't much of a corporate structure in the Muslim world, where the conditions often approximate more nearly to feudalism than capitalism, but bin Laden's own business conglomerate is, among other things, a rogue multinational corporation with some links to finance-capital. As to the nation-state, al-Qaida's demand is that countries like Iraq and Saudi Arabia be dissolved into one great revived caliphate, but doesn't this have points of resemblance with the mad scheme of a "Greater Germany" or with Mussolini's fantasy of a revived Roman empire?

Technically, no form of Islam preaches racial superiority or proposes a master race. But in practice, Islamic fanatics operate a fascistic concept of the "pure" and the "exclusive" over the unclean and the "kufar," or profane.

In the propaganda against Hinduism and India, for example, there can be seen something very like bigotry. In the attitude to Jews, it is clear that an inferior or unclean race is being talked about (which is why many Muslim extremists like the grand mufti

of Jerusalem gravitated to Hitler's side). In the attempted destruction of the Hazara people of Afghanistan, who are ethnically Persian as well as religiously Shiite, there was also a strong suggestion of "cleansing." And, of course, bin Laden has threatened force against UN peacekeepers who might dare interrupt the race-murder campaign against African Muslims that is being carried out by his pious Sudanese friends in Darfur.

This makes it permissible, it seems to me, to mention the two phenomena in the same breath and to suggest that they constitute comparable threats to civilization and civilized values. There is one final point of comparison, one that is in some ways encouraging.

Both these totalitarian systems of thought evidently suffer from a death wish. It is surely not an accident that both of them stress suicidal tactics and sacrificial ends, just as both of them would obviously rather see the destruction of their own societies than any compromise with infidels or any dilution of the joys of absolute doctrinal orthodoxy. Thus, while we have a duty to oppose and destroy these and any similar totalitarian movements, we can also be fairly sure that they will play an unconscious part in arranging for their own destruction, as well.

Christopher Hitchens, author of more than a dozen books, is a columnist for Vanity Fair and Slate Magazine (www.slate.com), where this column originally appeared.

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Trail Daily Times

Canadian soldiers take part in Terry Fox Run in Afghanistan

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 15

Section: Recreation

Dateline: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

Source: Canadian Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan -- There are some things that are just so Canadian that even a hot desert sun and being 11,000 kilometres away from home can't diminish it.

About 70 soldiers from a variety of NATO countries serving in Afghanistan joined the Terry Fox Run at Kandahar Air Field on Sunday, raising money for cancer research and to honour the memory of Fox, who attempted to run across Canada in his Marathon of Hope in 1979 after losing most of his right leg to cancer two years earlier.

Heavy military vehicles rumbled down gravel roads, churning up choking clouds of dust, as the participants ran along the 11-kilometre route which included a lap around the airfield's landing strip as helicopters hovered overhead and military jets took off and landed with deafening roars.

"It takes you back to being in Canada again because it is the Terry Fox run," said Master Petty Officer Matt O'Hara, 52, who has been in the service for 30 years and is originally from Edmonton. "It's something truly Canadian. Terry Fox was a Canadian hero."

The run is something extremely personal for O'Hara.

"I was diagnosed two years ago with pancreatic cancer and due to cancer research that's why I'm alive today," he revealed. "When I first saw the numbers, it was a 98-per-cent mortality rate and I was in the two-per-cent cure rate. Today, due to research, the cure rate is about 10 per cent."

The Terry Fox run is now held in 60 countries and it's the world's largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research.

Posters of Fox from his Marathon of Hope were placed strategically around the base. That makes it easy for even those who haven't heard of him to figure out what it is about explained Shelly Moore, one of the organizers.

"There's a lot of explanation involved, as well as to who Terry Fox is, but the image says a lot. The picture of Terry running down the road is really the quintessential Canadian picture," said Moore, a fitness, sport and recreational co-ordinator. "That picture is worth a thousand words."

The Terry Fox run is one of the most popular events at the base.

"I've done this overseas," said BJ La Porte, a former soldier now working as a civilian at Kandahar Air

Field. "This is not weird for me. Most of my Terry Fox runs have been done overseas. This is very Canadian."

A line of tiny Canadian flags marked both the beginning and end of the run, but it wasn't a Canadian runner who crossed the line first, second or even third. That honour went to a trio of British soldiers.

Warrant Officer Tarquin Kitchen crossed the line in second place and wasn't surprised his Canadian cousins were lagging far behind.

"Of course not. You can't win your own competitions can you?" he said with a laugh.

But at least Kitchen was aware of who Terry Fox was.

"This is my third run," he said. "I did a couple in Damascus. This is the harder one. The other ones were much cooler."

It was the poster that convinced Lance Cpl. Duncan Moore, of York, England to join the run. But even he found the heat and dust a challenge.

"I was a bit knackered on the backstretch," he admitted as he wiped away the sweat.

For O'Hara, his ongoing battle against the deadly disease will continue for the rest of his life as he remains part of a clinical trial. He wishes things had ended differently for Fox, who died in 1981.

He said he wished Fox could have been in Kandahar to see the fruits of his labour.

"I think he would be quite impressed with what he's got started here. It's gone on for 27 years and it's amazing."

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The Toronto Star

Redford targets youth; Director hopes film about Afghanistan ignites passion in students to take a stand against war

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: E05

Section: Entertainment

Source: The Associated Press

Illustrations: REUTERS photo Robert Redford, director of Lions for Lambs, and Tom Cruise, one of the film's stars, pose at Rome Film Festival.

Lions for Lambs

Robert Redford hopes his new film, Lions for Lambs, about U.S. military action in Afghanistan, will encourage American youth to "take command of their voice."

In the United States, "we have lost lives, we have lost sacred freedoms, we have lost financial stability, we have lost our position of respect on the world stage," the Oscar-winning filmmaker told a news conference yesterday.

"I can only speak for my own country, I cannot speak for other countries, but I assume it is similar in some countries," Redford, 70, said. "But the future is going to belong to young people and young people have to take command of their voice."

Lions for Lambs, which follows six individuals over the course of an hour, is being shown out of competition at the Rome Film Festival.

In the movie, directed and starring Redford, two U.S. Special Forces soldiers are on a mountain ridge in Afghanistan. Meryl Streep plays a hard-bitten journalist who discusses the operation and U.S. government policy with a prominent U.S. senator, played by Tom Cruise. Redford is an aging, idealistic professor who meets with a bright, cynical student.

The war on terrorism saga also explores the issue of media freedom versus political power as Streep's character engages in edgy intellectual parrying with Cruise's senator.

Cruise said the movie "really ignited a huge flame and a lot of dialogue" at screenings at U.S. colleges, "which is what I think is what this kind of film should do."

"Are (American youth) going to become politically active or are they going to move away from it because they are ... disillusioned and they don't respect it because there is no morality in leadership, so therefore they just move away to other things," Redford said. "If that happens we may have a continuation of what we have had."

Lions for Lambs will be in U.S. and Canadian theatres Nov. 9.

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The Sun News

Wednesday Globe

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 4

Section: A

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

GEORGIA

Governor orders water cut to conserve supply

Atlanta | Gov. Sonny Perdue ordered north Georgia businesses and utilities to cut water usage by 10 percent on Tuesday in a move designed to conserve more of the state's dwindling water supply during an epic drought.

Perdue calls the order a "first step" to reducing water usage during the drought, and encouraged Georgia residents to treat their drying lawns and dirty cars as a "badge of honor."

ILLINOIS

Improper inhaler use leads to complications

Chicago | About a third of patients with asthma or chronic obstructive disease use their dry powder inhalers incorrectly, putting them at risk of developing dangerous complications from their disease, according to a study presented to chest physicians meeting this week in Chicago.

TEXAS

Muslim charity leaders to be retried in court

Dallas | Prosecutors will likely retry the former leaders of a Muslim charity, as well as the organization itself, after the government's biggest terror-financing case since Sept. 11 ended in a mistrial.

FLORIDA

Hurricane center looking for new director

Fort Lauderdale | The National Hurricane Center may have a new director within a month, and at least two names are on the candidate list: acting deputy director Bill Read and senior hurricane specialist Rick Knabb.

Today is the deadline to apply.

NEW YORK

Women writers awarded journalism honors

New York | Six Iraqi women who've worked in the Knight Ridder and McClatchy Baghdad bureau received the International Women's Media Foundation Courage in Journalism Award Tuesday.

The foundation also honored Lydia Cacho, a Mexican journalist who exposed a pedophilia ring in the resort city of Cancun and subsequently was seized by police, apparently acting on the orders of a state governor, and Serkalem Fasil of Ethiopia, who was jailed for her criticism of the Ethiopian government, a U. S. ally in the battle against Islamic militants in neighboring Somalia.

AROUND THE WORLD

FRANCE

Immigrants face DNA test upon entrance

Paris | French lawmakers adopted a hotly contested bill on Tuesday that would institute language exams and potential DNA testing for prospective immigrants, making it more difficult for families to join loved ones in France.

The DNA amendment, the most controversial aspect of the legislation, is meant to ensure that claims of family ties are true. It was added as a way to ensure that visa-seekers were not using fraudulent papers.

ITALY

Nuclear program meetings promising

Rome | The European Union's foreign policy chief described his meeting with the new Iranian negotiator on Tehran's nuclear program as "constructive" Tuesday and said more talks were planned for the end of November.

It was Javier Solana's first session since the appointment of Saeed Jalili following the resignation of Ali Larijani over the weekend.

AFGHANISTAN

20 insurgents killed in Afghan airstrike

Kabul | NATO and Afghan troops called in airstrikes during a battle against insurgents in central Afghanistan, killing 20 suspected militants and several civilians, officials said Tuesday.

ISRAEL

Gaza Strip attack targets, kills militant leader

Jerusalem | An Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday killed a leader of the militant Popular Resistance Committees, which has been responsible for cross-border rocket fire against Israel.

The attack came amid a flurry of salvos by Palestinian militants from the coastal enclave. Israeli military officials said more than 15 projectiles were launched during the 24 hours preceding the air attack that targeted Mubarak Hasanat.

VENEZUELA

Students protest presidential re-election

Caracas | Thousands of university students scuffled with police and government supporters during a protest Tuesday against constitutional reforms that would let President Hugo Chavez run for re-election indefinitely.

Police tossed tear gas canisters into the crowd of opposition students after bottle-throwing clashes broke out with a smaller group of pro-Chavez demonstrators near the National Assembly.

CUBA

Castro attacks President Bush's intentions

Havana | Fidel Castro wrote Tuesday that President Bush is threatening the world with nuclear war and famine - an attack on Washington a day before the White House was to announce new plans to draw Cuba away from communism.

"The danger of a massive world famine is aggravated by Mr. Bush's recent initiative to transform foods into fuel," Castro wrote in Cuban news media, referring to U.S. support for using corn and other food crops to produce gasoline substitutes.

The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)

Civilian deaths frustrate Karzai

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: C11

Section: World

Dateline: PUL-I-ALAM Afghanistan

Source: Reuters

PUL-I-ALAM Afghanistan (Reuters) -- Western forces have killed eleven members of an Afghan family in an air strike near Kabul, the head of a provincial council said on Tuesday.

Civilian casualties in Afghanistan fuel resentment of foreign forces and the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai who has repeatedly beseeched U.S. and NATO troops to do everything they can to minimize civilian deaths.

"We welcomed the international community to Afghanistan to launch a joint campaign against terrorism and the Taliban," Karzai told Channel 4 News on a visit to London.

"But six years on the continuation of civilian casualties is something the Afghan people cannot understand, and rightly so," he added. "It is becoming increasingly a difficult subject for us and is going to cause friction."

Provincial council leader Haji Janan told Reuters the latest incident occurred on Monday in Jalrez, 30 kilometres west of the capital.

The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)

Many Afghans optimistic, but mistrust government

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: C11

Section: World

Dateline: SINGAPORE

Source: Reuters

SINGAPORE (Reuters) -- Many Afghans are optimistic about the direction the war-torn country is taking, but have mixed feelings about their government, a survey released Tuesday found.

Forty-two per cent of those interviewed this year said things were moving in the right direction, marginally lower than the 44 per cent in 2006, the Asia Foundation said.

That compared to 24 per cent who saw Afghanistan moving in the wrong direction, an increase from 21 per cent the previous year.

It was the foundation's third such poll since 2004 and involved more than 6,000 interviews with Afghan men and women across the country.

While 80 per cent thought the government was doing a good job, 79 per cent said it did not care what people thought and 69 per cent said talking negatively about the government in public was unacceptable.

Corruption was seen as a major problem throughout government, although: "Perception of the prevalence of corruption was higher at the national level," where 74 per cent saw widespread corruption against 48 per cent for the local level.

The foundation, a non-profit private organization, said it designed and directed the survey, although funding came from a U.S. government aid agency grant.

Of those surveyed who thought the country was moving in the wrong direction, 48 per cent cited insecurity as the main reason.

A Taliban-led insurgency backed by al-Qaida has intensified in Afghanistan in the past two years, with this year one of the most violent since 2001 when the Taliban lost control of the government in fighting with other Afghan and U.S.-led forces.

Still, two-thirds of those polled thought security in their own areas was good or quite good.

While the government and its foreign allies have scored some major conventional successes this year, the Taliban have increasingly turned to such tactics as suicide bombs and roadside explosives, with much of that activity occurring since field work for the survey was conducted in June.

The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)

U.S. renews call for more Afghan troops

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: C11

Section: World

Dateline: BRUSSELS

Source: Reuters

Illustrations: Colour Photo: Reuters / A Canadian soldier radios for help for a wounded comrade after a Taliban attack Tuesday in Kandahar province

BRUSSELS (Reuters) -- The United States will lead pressure on European allies to supply more troops and equipment to fight Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan at NATO talks today but could come away frustrated, alliance sources said.

Defence chiefs will, however, reaffirm their commitment to maintaining a 17,000-strong peace force in the breakaway Serb province of Kosovo amid uncertainty over its future.

They could also discuss NATO member Turkey's threat of incursions into northern Iraq to crush Kurdish separatists.

The familiar U.S. refrain on Afghanistan will have a sharper edge than usual at the two-day meeting of NATO defence ministers in the Dutch coastal resort of Noordwijk because key nations are under public pressure to pull out troops.

The Netherlands is studying whether to extend past August next year the mandate for its 1,600 troops in the thick of the violence in the south, a move that could influence Canada's decision on renewing the mandate for its force in early 2009.

The Dutch government hopes the meeting on its home soil will help convince a skeptical public and parliament of the need for the mission. It is also expected to appeal to allies to offer more troops so that it can at least slim down its presence.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates accused allies on Monday of not living up to past promises on troops, equipment and army trainers, setting the tone for what could be fraught talks.

"The secretary does not seek to single out or embarrass any one nation but remind this powerful alliance of their moral responsibility and collective commitments made at Riga," Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said of a pledge made by NATO leaders at a summit in Latvia last year to ensure success in Afghanistan.

While the Czech Republic and Slovakia announced ahead of the meeting that they would add a total of some 160 troops, NATO sources doubt any major reinforcements to the 40,000-strong NATO mission will emerge immediately from the meeting.

"This is not a force generation conference," said one NATO official, playing down expectations of any significant moves.

Ahead of the meeting Britain has denied suggestions

it is preparing reinforcements, as has Denmark. France and Germany have both indicated they cannot do more, and some allies brushed off Gates' criticism as the standard U.S. line.

"It is part of the ritual. It is part of the American logic to push for more, more. But we do not share that logic, nor do we have the capabilities to do so," said one NATO diplomat who nonetheless doubted there would be any major row at the meeting.

Violence has increased sharply in southern Afghanistan over the past two years, the bloodiest period since the Taliban's radical Islamic government was toppled by U.S.-led coalition forces in late 2001, with some 7,000 killed across the country.

The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has mushroomed in size during that time, partly because the United States has put troops under its command and partly because of reinforcements from other allies.

The State

Wednesday's Letters to the Editor

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: 0
Section: A

**** Gamecock fans have nothing to boo about**

I have been attending Gamecock football games for more than 47 years. This past Saturday as the fans booed, it gave me pause to think. This is a team that was (at that moment) 6- 1. Most years we would be ecstatic to be 6-1 at that point in our season. We have a coach who is giving us hope like we have never experienced, and we are booing?

Yes, the Gamecocks had a lackluster performance, but booing is just not appropriate. I was as disappointed as anyone, but the players don't know if you are booing them, the coaches, the play-calling, the silly songs, etc.

They are mainly teenagers out there trying to do their best, and sometimes they fall short.

We need to stop the booing. If you don't want to cheer the effort, then just be quiet, but don't turn on your team and coaching staff.

Maybe we all got a bit too excited when we were ranked No. 6 in the Bowl Championship Series and had delusions of grandeur, a disease Gamecock fans have suffered from for years. Just stick with the Spur. He has a lot better track record than the fans at Williams-Brice.

SARAH VANN BONDS

Columbia

**** Players need helmets on mo-peds, too**

I read with interest the article Friday "Big Men on Little Wheels" describing the USC football players' use of mo-peds for transportation.

The article included photographs of four football players, none of them wearing helmets.

Player Scott Spurrier is quoted as saying the players "aren't doing anything stupid" on the mo-peds. I'd have to disagree with that statement. They are getting on mo-peds and riding without helmets. I doubt that these same young men would venture onto the football field without a helmet.

Safety on the road is absolutely as important an issue as safety on the football field.

I hope the USC football players will recognize that soon and will start to wear helmets on the road.

DEBORAH GREENHOUSE, M.D.

Columbia

**** Lexington lucky to get Inferno**

Congratulations are in order for Lexington County on the recent announcement to build the Inferno's arena in our community. Land will be developed; that is a fact.

Fortunate we are to have Ezra Riber bring this project to Lexington County. Dr. Riber is a man with the highest level of professionalism, commitment and dedication of any doctor I have ever dealt with.

If Lexington County is smart, residents will welcome him and his team with open arms.

Change is hard for some, but it is inevitable; jump on this chance while you have it.

As for myself, welcome, glad to have you, and what took you so long to get here?

LAURA H. MOONEYHAN

West Columbia

**** U.S. waging real war against real enemy**

In regards to Dean Slade's letter Sunday ("War on terror" not a conventional war"), it appears he has used Matthew 23:24 in a way that defeats his own point: "Ye blind guides which strain at (out) a gnat but swallow a camel" is the verse he uses to suggest that the United States is inappropriately fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

To the contrary, we are trying to deal with the camel, and I would prefer it be on the camel's own soil, rather than ours.

DARIN L. PASSER

Columbia

**** Public works should honor dead**

Thank you for Saturday's editorial concerning renaming the Lexington County sheriff's headquarters for Sheriff James Metts.

Some years ago, when Batesburg-Leesville built the fine arts center, I along with many others thought it should be named the "Martha Watson Fine Arts Center."

No one in this town had a more profound impact on music than Mrs. Watson. It was stated at the time that the rule was you don't name things for people who

are still living.

JO HARRIS

Batesburg

** Denial won't stop global warming

It never ceases to amaze me just how blissful ignorance must really be. Christopher Lampman must have been on cloud nine when he wrote his letter about how Al Gore's recent award has tarnished the Nobel Peace Prize.

At what point will society wake up and realize that our environmental issues are not a political problem, not some left-wing tree-hugging propaganda and not an economic constraint but a very real, very serious world problem?

How daft are we as a society that the pieces can't be logically put together in our minds?

You extract tons of carbon from the Earth, burn it and expect its presence in the atmosphere to mean nothing?

Regardless of the Earth's natural cycles of warming and cooling, man has tipped the scales, and eventually we're going to see how far. The evidence of warming we see today is thanks to the ignorance of two generations ago.

This climate "sham" is about to become very real indeed for future generations. Whatever happened to environmental responsibility and taking care of our only home? As Winston Churchill said, "The price of greatness is responsibility."

It's about time we faced that truth. Kudos to Mr. Gore for his efforts.

JOHN DERRICK

Lexington

The State

Redford's message

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 2

Section: A

Actor hopes film will stir American youth

Robert Redford hopes his new film, "Lions for Lambs," about U.S. military action in Afghanistan, will encourage American youth to "take command of their voice."

In the United States, "we have lost lives, we have lost sacred freedoms, we have lost financial stability, we have lost our position of respect on the world stage," the Oscar-winning filmmaker said at a news conference Tuesday.

"I can only speak for my own country; I cannot speak for other countries -- but I assume it is similar in some countries," Redford, 70, said. "But the future is going to belong to young people, and young people have to take command of their voice."

"Lions for Lambs," which follows six individuals over the course of an hour, is being shown out of competition at the Rome Film Festival.

In the movie, directed and starring Redford, two U.S. soldiers from the military's Special Forces are on a mountain ridge in Afghanistan. Meryl Streep plays a hard-bitten journalist who discusses the operation and U.S. government policy with a prominent U.S. senator, played by Tom Cruise. Redford is an aging, idealistic professor who meets with a bright, cynical student.

Cruise said the movie "really ignited a huge flame and a lot of dialogue" at screenings at U.S. colleges, "which is what I think ... this kind of film should do."

"Lions for Lambs" will be in U.S. theaters Nov. 9.

-- The Associated Press

The Sun News

Talk of the Day Redford hopes U.S. youths find voice

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: 2
Section: A

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Keillor secures restraining order

St. Paul, Minn. | Garrison Keillor has gotten a restraining order against a Georgia woman he claims has made telephone calls and sent him explicit e-mails and disturbing gifts, including a petrified alligator foot and dead beetles.

A Ramsey County District judge issued the order against Andrea R. Campbell, 43, of Hawkinsville, Ga., on Friday. Campbell said she received it Monday.

In the petition filed Oct. 12, Keillor, 65, claimed the harassment started April 28, after Campbell attended a live performance of his public radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," in Columbus, Ga.

Simpson co-defendants get deals

Las Vegas | Two co-defendants pleaded guilty to reduced charges Tuesday in the O.J. Simpson armed robbery case, agreeing to testify against Simpson and three others in the alleged hotel room theft of sports collectibles from two memorabilia dealers.

Clark County District Attorney David Roger agreed to drop charges including kidnapping, armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon and conspiracy against Walter Alexander, Simpson's golfing buddy, and Charles Cashmore, at times a day laborer, disc jockey and bartender.

With testimony from the two men secured, prosecutors moved quickly to prepare revised charges against Simpson, Clarence "C.J." Stewart, Michael McClinton and Charles Ehrlich.

Anti-nuclear activists reunite

Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne and Graham Nash, who were on the front lines of the anti-nuke movement in 1979, when they organized "No Nukes!" concerts at Madison Square Garden, are back with the cause.

"Thirty years ago, we felt that this monster was dead," Nash said. "It's trying to raise its ugly head." He was referring to a Senate version of a new energy bill that contains a provision for federal loan guarantees for building new nuclear power plants.

The three activists were on Capitol Hill Tuesday armed with a 120,000- signature petition to urge Congress not to approve the loan guarantee provision.

Birthdays today

Rock musician Bill Wyman, 71

Actor-producer David Nelson, 71

Actor F. Murray Abraham, 68

Actor Kevin Kline, 60

The Sun News

Capitol Hill

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: 5
Section: A

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MILITARY

Suicide prevention bill heads to Bush

Congress took steps Tuesday to reduce the high rate of suicides among former members of the armed forces, but only after a gun rights senator succeeded in removing a plan to track veterans treated for mental illnesses.

The suicide prevention bill, which was passed 417-0 and sent to President Bush for his signature, comes amid growing concerns over mental health issues borne by veterans who have seen combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

TRANSPORTATION

Airlines fight proposal to cut JFK flights

The nation's major airlines threatened Tuesday to go to court or Congress to fight a federal proposal to cut flights at New York's delay-plagued John F. Kennedy International Airport by up to 20 percent.

The Air Transport Association drew its line in the sand as the Federal Aviation Administration began two days of talks with the carriers on how to avoid a recurrence of the situation last summer at JFK, when more than a third of all takeoffs and landings were late.

SPENDING

Farm legislation compromise draws critics

Farm-state senators have crafted a tentative compromise on a \$288 billion farm bill, but they already face bipartisan criticism that the bill doesn't do enough to cut government subsidies. Critics say the legislation is too heavy on subsidies for wealthy farmers and should spend more money on conservation programs designed to protect the land and on food programs for the poor.

PRODUCT SAFETY

Treasury secretary asks China to cooperate

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said Tuesday that the recalls of tainted Chinese products were causing fear among U.S. consumers. He called on China to take bold moves to address that and other economic problems facing the two countries. He said both countries needed to work together to address safety issues that have been raised about a host of Chinese products from tainted toothpaste to toys containing

lead paint.

TRADE

Agreement to strengthen counterfeit fight

The Bush administration announced Tuesday that it plans to negotiate a trade agreement with other major countries to bolster the fight against counterfeit products.

U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab said the administration planned to join with other countries to negotiate an Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement that would toughen efforts to confront copyright piracy.

TAXATION

Official: Temporary fix would delay refunds

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson warned lawmakers Tuesday that delays in enacting a temporary fix to the alternative minimum tax could cause millions of taxpayers to experience delays in receiving their refunds.

In a letter to Congress, Paulson also again warned Congress that failure to pass an AMT fix would expose 21 million mostly unsuspecting taxpayers to the minimum tax - and an average tax increase of \$2,000.

SPENDING

Agencies urged to coordinate on vaccines

The government stands to waste \$100 million a year if two federal agencies cannot agree to coordinate the use of a vaccine for the deadly anthrax bacterial disease.

The departments of Defense and Health and Human Services each purchase the anthrax vaccine, BioThrax. But much of the vaccine purchased for HHS goes unused, according to government investigators.

Currently the Strategic National Stockpile has more than 520,000 doses of the vaccine - worth \$12 million - that have already expired, according to a Government Accountability Office report.

GAO said the two departments should create a single inventory system for these drugs so they are not wasted.

INVESTIGATION

Ex-U.S. attorney general decries prosecution

A Republican U.S. attorney general from the first Bush administration told a House panel Tuesday he thinks the Justice Department had political aims in prosecuting a high-profile Democratic coroner from Pennsylvania.

Dick Thornburgh, whose law firm is representing coroner Cyril Wecht in the pending trial and who acknowledged speaking as an advocate for Wecht, said the outspoken Democrat was "an ideal target for a Republican U.S. attorney trying to curry favor with a [Justice] Department which demonstrated that if you play by its rules, you will advance."

NOMINATION

Former fighter pilot in mind to head FAA

A former Topgun Navy fighter pilot who went on to fly commercial jetliners is being nominated to run the Federal Aviation Administration for the next five years.

Now acting FAA administrator, Robert A. Sturgell, 48, who goes by Bobby, will be nominated by President Bush for promotion by Congress to the permanent position.

CENSURE

GOP fails to pass action against legislator

Republicans failed in an effort Tuesday to have the House censure Rep. Pete Stark, D-Calif., who said in a congressional speech last week that U.S. troops are being sent to Iraq "to get their heads blown off for the president's amusement."

Without debate, the House voted 196-173 to kill the proposal to censure Stark for "his despicable conduct."

The Leader-Post (Regina)

Military math

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: B6
Section: Viewpoints
Column: Other Voices
Source: The Edmonton Journal.

Are we spending too much money on our military? Has the Harper government gone overboard, or is it just making up for decades of neglect? Well, it depends on who you talk to, and the yardsticks they bring to the table.

For many years, it was commonplace to harbour the notion that we didn't fund our armed forces to international standards. Most of us could summon images of Canadian Forces convoys made up of gasping, antique half-tracks and Dinky Toy troop transports lumbering down the nation's highways.

For some in this land, that was just fine. In their reading, Canada, proudly unmilitaristic, should avoid foreign entanglements -- and especially any combat action in league with the Americans -- at all costs. Federal funds should flow to almost anything else, from social programs to allowing for tax cuts.

Other Canadians considered us global freeloaders and NATO layabouts, leaving the heavy lifting to other countries. Our place in the world and a proud military heritage had been laid waste in return for cheap, cynical electoral gain.

The newly formed Conservative Party led by Stephen Harper not only subscribed to the latter view, it solemnly pledged to reverse the trend. Since assuming power, it has made that mission a stated priority.

And while the war in Afghanistan remains controversial, the essential rightness of restoring dignity through increasing funding of the Forces is now widely shared outside Quebec.

Suddenly, however, along comes a new study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that claims Canadian defence spending has hit its highest level since the Second World War. And far from being a NATO laggard, we now rank sixth among member nations, outspending the likes of Spain, Turkey and the Netherlands among nine others. It continues by reporting that since just before 9/11, Canadian military funding will have increased a whopping 37 per cent by 2009, given the government's commitments.

How, then, to reconcile that with the near universally accepted idea that we are only slowly getting up to speed?

Well, of course, it's a matter of apples and oranges. The centre blames the media for lazily accepting the metrics they say are employed by proponents of funding increases to the military. Those figures are based not on dollar totals, but on spending expressed

as a percentage of gross domestic product. By that measure, Canada would rank around 20th among NATO countries.

In fact, the GDP method has long been the preferred yardstick, for both pro- and anti-military funding orbits. But, if nothing else, the new report helps explain why even informed Canadians might scratch their heads over conflicting claims by interest groups. Why should we trust the numbers, when the numbers games are as different as Scrabble and Monopoly?

- This editorial was originally published in the Edmonton Journal.

Simcoe Reformer

On the front lines

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: 4
Section: Editorial/Opinion
Column: Across Canada

An editorial from the Stratford Beacon-Herald

It's easy, and quite popular, to pass judgment and offer advice and opinions from the sidelines. That's human nature, and people do it all the time -- newspapers too.

Take your average Toronto Maple Leafs game. By the time the final horn sounds, fans have the Leafs' woes all figured out before they've made it out to Bay Street or switched the channel.

The same can be said of politics. Down here in southern Ontario we have all sorts of ideas as to what they should be doing on Parliament Hill. Some of those ideas have merit, but in many cases the problems are a little more complex than the layperson might think.

And how about problems on the other side of the world? Again, plenty of people have no shortage of answers as to what Canadians should be doing in Afghanistan. By and large, one of the more popular suggestions is nothing -- that we shouldn't be there at all, but now that we're there the next most important thing to do is get out as soon as possible.

And just like it might be a good idea to ask one of the Toronto Maple Leafs what they think their team should do differently, it's interesting to hear what Canadian soldiers have to say about the war in Afghanistan.

Many Canadian citizens think it's just plain foolish to be there. It's too dangerous. We're going it alone. Afghans don't even want us there and it's not making any difference in the grand scheme of things.

Those are widely held perceptions.

But Canadian soldiers, the ones who put their lives on the line, offer some interesting insights that bear hearing out. Canada has set a self-imposed deadline of February 2009 to complete its commitment, but in the recent throne speech the Conservative government says Canada should stay involved in Afghanistan until at least 2011. That will be a matter of great debate on Parliament Hill in the coming months.

Some soldiers quoted in a Canadian Press story are wondering aloud about the wisdom of being over there.

"Things won't change," says the soldier who has served previously in Bosnia and Haiti. He did not want to be identified.

He says corruption in government and the Afghan national police and the fierce tribal rivalries that divide the country will result in Afghanistan falling back into chaos and civil war whether Canada leaves in 18 months, four years or a decade from now.

His words are echoed at another base on another day by another soldier.

This soldier is on his second tour in Afghanistan, having served in Kabul in 2004. With 14 years in the Forces, he too served in Bosnia and Haiti.

And like many issues, there are no clear answers or consensus.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government wants Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan until at least 2011. The throne speech has tied the eventual exit to the training of Afghan national security forces, including the army and police.

"This will not be completed by February 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011," said the speech.

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The Toronto Star

For Afghans, NATO troops aren't the enemy

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: AA07

Section: Letter

Perhaps Afghans gave the safest

answers

Letter, Oct. 22

The letter writer claims that the recent poll in Afghanistan that showed popular support for NATO troops is tainted because the locals fear a violent backlash from occupation troops, just as those under Nazi-occupied Europe would have. A more insulting attack on our troops is hard to imagine.

A poll comes out that doesn't back up the anti-war position, so therefore the poll must be tainted by NATO troops terrorizing the locals into favourable responses? Needless to say, no evidence was offered to support this twisted claim because none exists.

By all indications, Afghans fear speaking out against the Taliban far more than against our soldiers. Indeed, 16 per cent of recent poll respondents said the presence of foreign troops was a bad thing.

Jan Burton, Toronto

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The Toronto Star

Think-tank to study foreign relations; BlackBerry's Balsillie backing enterprise to put hot international issues front and centre

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: AA01
Section: World And Comment
Byline: Olivia Ward
Source: Toronto Star

Every policy wonk dreams of gaining a firm grip on the ear of the body politic. But for Canada's foreign policy community, taking a back seat to domestic issues has become a political fact of life.

Tomorrow, a group of experts, spearheaded by BlackBerry billionaire Jim Balsillie, will launch an enterprise aimed at putting the hot-button international issues of the day front and centre in Canada.

A five-star audience of politicians, pundits and top drawer corporate executives will be mustering at a gala fundraiser for the new Canadian International Council, a foreign policy research think-tank that will be a forum for some of the country's best brains.

"The need has never been greater," says Balsillie. "When you open the paper any day the big issues are global warming, energy security, Arctic sovereignty, Iraq, Afghanistan, humanitarian crises. It's a perfect storm."

Yet, he says, at the last federal election there was a deafening silence around foreign policy issues. And for the leaders, no public debate.

"We want that to change," says Balsillie, co-CEO of Research In Motion, the Waterloo-based developer of the BlackBerry. "It happens in the United States and other countries. Why not here?"

The new council, modelled on powerful groups like the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations and London's Chatham House, will promote debate on foreign policy and international relations, and publish work by a widely assorted group of research fellows.

For experts who are often struggling to promote their views, "it's like Christmas Day," says Douglas Goold, who will head the new council. Balsillie will chair the organization.

"The plan is to build Canadian capacity, and end up with something that will be equivalent to those groups," says Goold, currently president of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs.

The institute will merge with the new body, whose partners will be the University of Toronto's Munk Centre for International Studies and the Waterloo-based Centre for International Governance Innovation. It will also have links with francophone policy groups, and academics and universities across Canada.

"What we have now are a lot of smaller institutions whose voices aren't really heard," says John English, executive director of CIGI. "This will be a place for solid research, and where the media can call for comment on everything from Arctic sovereignty to Afghanistan."

Ottawa is also listening. Among the guests at tonight's dinner will be Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier and senior foreign affairs officials.

The keynote address is by Mexican economist and diplomat Angel Gurría, secretary-general of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, who is receiving the council's first Globalist of the Year award.

Balsillie, who has committed some \$80 million to boost Canada's profile in international affairs, kicked off the new project with \$1 million. It is already on the way to raising an additional \$2 million for an inaugural budget.

"It only takes \$3 million a year to keep 25 fellows going," Balsillie says. "I'm optimistic that it will work. It will be high-functioning, well resourced and accountable. People want to be part of something successful."

The council will be the most ambitious independent international policy organization in Canada, and will give a forum to people with a wide range of political views - a difficult balance in a field that is often polarized.

"We're not saying what the research should be about," says Balsillie. "Our fellows will work harder than they ever have in their lives. But we're giving them a bigger megaphone."

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The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)

Bhutto to avoid mass rallies after death threat

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: A7
Section: Front
Dateline: KARACHI, PAKISTAN
Source: The Associated Press

Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto said yesterday she had received a new death threat but will start campaigning in Pakistani cities in the next couple of days, avoiding mass rallies.

Five days after the suicide bombing that killed at least 136 at her homecoming procession in Karachi, Bhutto said her lawyer received a letter from an unidentified "friend of al-Qaida" threatening to slaughter her "like a goat."

Bhutto said the letter was addressed to her lawyer, Farooq Naik, and had been left for him at the Supreme Court in Islamabad. She said Naik was alerting the chief justice of the threat.

"There are elements who want to kill us," Bhutto said at her heavily guarded residence in this southern city. "They are petrified that the Pakistan People's Party will return (to power) and that democracy will return.

"They are trying to derail the democratic process because they know if the people are employed and educated the forces of extremism and terrorism will be weakened," she said.

The authenticity of the letter could not be confirmed. Bhutto said the writer claimed to be the "head of the suicide bombers and a friend of al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden."

Bhutto returned Thursday from eight years in exile to campaign for parliamentary elections due in January, after months of talks with President Gen. Pervez Musharraf that could see them working side-by-side in the next government.

She said that after discussions, her party had decided she should avoid staging mass rallies because of the risk of suicide and roadside bombings, but would still address public meetings.

"The party decided I should go from Karachi to Islamabad, Lahore or Larkana (Bhutto's hometown) in the next couple of days. We will be not be holding public rallies but will be travelling to meet the people in other provinces," she said.

Bhutto has blamed alleged extremist elements in the government and the security apparatus for the bombing that ripped through Thursday's rally in Karachi -- claims the government denies.

She alleges they include remnants of the regime of former military leader Gen. Zia-ul Haq, who oversaw

mujahedeen groups that fought the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, then became Taliban and al-Qaida. She alleges some members of the ruling party, including its chief, were behind Thursday's attack.

That has raised questions about how the parties could form a coalition in support of Musharraf after the elections. Although Bhutto and Musharraf are rivals, both are moderates keen to combat religious extremism. And Musharraf has signed an amnesty to quash graft cases against Bhutto.

Bhutto's party has said she is on a list of people who are not allowed to leave the country, but local media reports say that is not the case.

Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, a close Musharraf aide, predicted Tuesday that the People's Party would be part of the next government.

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Cape Breton Post

Explosion damages Canadian vehicle

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: B6
Section: International
Source: CP

One of Canada's newest weapons against roadside bombs in Afghanistan became the victim of an improvised explosive device on Tuesday.

The Husky mine-detection vehicle was damaged by an explosion; the driver escaped unhurt.

Roadside explosives have taken a terrible toll on Canadian soldiers, so it was with pride that the military recently unveiled the Husky, a vehicle built in South Africa that resembles a road grader.

In essence, the vehicle acts like a bird dog using a combination of technology including X-ray and metal detection. If it spots anything suspicious, it drops a puddle of ink so the spot can be further investigated.

Its design, with a high one-man cockpit set back on the chassis and huge wheels in the front, provides maximum protection for the driver.

A pair of Huskies were making their way along Route Foster - a narrow, winding highway that runs west of Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in Kandahar province. The area is a daily battle ground between Canadian forces trying to keep it free from mines, and Taliban insurgents who have free reign in many parts of the area.

After a number of false alarms in the first kilometre of what was supposed to be a 10-kilometre journey, Sgt. Jean-Francois De Wolfe sighed: "It's going to be a very long day."

Danger is everywhere on this stretch of road.

In its early stages, the road is buffeted by mountains on one side and grape orchards, small villages and grape-drying huts on the other. The huts resemble bunkers, and have been used as such at times in battle.

The road narrows continually, eventually giving way to the plains and fields of tall marijuana and opium poppy crops.

A warning came upon entering this area.

"This next two or three kilometres is where most of the attacks have happened recently," said De Wolfe.

Every piece of disturbed earth, empty sandbags or even the remnants of other bombings set off alarm bells on the Husky. The 10-kilometre journey was beginning to look like 1,000.

One of the Huskies passed through a further narrowing of the road unscathed - but the second one

wasn't so lucky.

A loud bang, the acrid smell of explosives and a blinding cloud of dust indicated the Taliban had struck again - successfully.

The front end of the Husky was nowhere to be seen but the rest of it, including the driver in his cockpit, were OK.

"He said dammit, I spilled my water bottle," laughed De Wolfe, who was in contact with the other driver over his radio.

Cpl. Pierre Brule, 31, was greeted with applause and laughter when he entered the lead command vehicle later. It was suggested he should have to pay for the damages out of his salary.

"What happened? Boom. That's all I have to say," chuckled Brule, who later was working on his vehicle to get it ready to be shipped back to base.

"It was too quick to be scared anyway. The vehicle just dropped to the ground so it was pretty cool."

A crater two metres wide and a metre deep indicated the force of the blast.

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The Toronto Star

U.S. to urge European allies to bolster Afghan forces

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A24

Section: News

Byline: Mark John

Source: ; REUTERS NEWS AGENCY

The United States will pressure European allies at NATO talks today to supply more troops and equipment to fight Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan but could come away frustrated, alliance sources said.

Defence chiefs, however, will reaffirm their commitment to maintaining a 17, 000-strong peace force in the Serb province of Kosovo amid uncertainty over its future.

The familiar U.S. refrain on Afghanistan will have a sharper edge than usual at the two-day meeting of NATO defence ministers in the Dutch coastal resort of Noordwijk because key nations are under public pressure to pull out troops.

The Netherlands is studying whether to extend the August 2008 mandate for its 1,600 troops in the south, a move that could influence Canada's decision on renewing the February 2009 mandate for its 2,500 troops in Afghanistan.

The Dutch government hopes the meeting on its home soil will help convince a skeptical public and parliament of the need for the mission. It is also expected to appeal to allies to offer more troops so that it can at least slim down its presence.

While the Czech Republic and Slovakia announced ahead of the meeting that they would add about 160 troops, NATO sources doubt any major reinforcements to the 40,000-strong NATO mission will emerge immediately from the meeting.

Ahead of the meeting Britain has denied suggestions it is preparing reinforcements, as has Denmark. France and Germany have both indicated they cannot do more.

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Agence France Presse (English)

The AFP world news agenda at 0800 GMT

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: International News
Dateline: PARIS
Time: 07:53:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

PARIS, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - What's coming up around the world:

-- TOP STORIES --

+ Turkish PM chairs meeting on Kurdish rebels

+ NATO ministers discuss Afghanistan

+ California battles wildfires

ANKARA: President Abdullah Gul chairs a meeting of the National Security Council to discuss measures against the strongholds Kurdish rebels enjoy in northern Iraq. 1100 GMT. Picture (TURKEY-KURDS-UNREST)

NOORDWIJK, Netherlands: NATO defence ministers start two days of informal talks focused on the need for more troops in Afghanistan -- against a backdrop of US complaints -- and relations with Russia. From 1200 GMT. (NATO-AFGHANISTAN-US-MILITARY)

LOS ANGELES: California wildfires continue to rage as half a million people are ordered to evacuate their homes. (US-FIRES). Picture. Graphic

-- OTHER AGENDA ITEMS --

JOHANNESBURG: Family and friends attend memorial service for murdered South African reggae star Lucky Dube at 1000 GMT. Picture (SAFRICA-CRIME-MUSIC-DUBE).

LONDON: Campaigners mark the 12 years that Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has spent in detention by protesting outside the Chinese embassy, with similar demonstrations in other world capitals. (MYANMAR-UNREST-PROTEST)

MARRAKESH: Last day of a visit by French President Nicholas Sarkozy. Signing of multi-million-euro Franco-Moroccan commercial deals. (MOROCCO-FRANCE- DIPLOMACY)

ROME: Prime Minister Romano Prodi meets Ari Larijani, Iran's nuclear negotiator who resigned on Saturday. 1030 GMT, followed by news conference at 1330 GMT with EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana to attend. (IRAN-NUCLEAR-EU)

WASHINGTON: President George W. Bush is to give a major speech on US policy towards Cuba

including initiatives to help the Cuban people. 13:15 pm (1715 GMT). (US-CUBA)

afp

World-news-agenda

AFP 240753 GMT 10 07

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Agence France Presse (English)

Pakistan, Afghan tribal elders to meet on Taliban insurgency

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: International News
Dateline: ISLAMABAD
Time: 09:37:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

ISLAMABAD, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - Pakistan and Afghanistan will hold the first meeting of a tribal council early next month to discuss border security amid an upsurge in Taliban-linked violence, an official said Wednesday.

About 50 tribal elders from both nations will meet in Islamabad to talk about securing stability and trying to make contact with moderate Taliban who have agreed to accept the rule of law, an official said.

The council was born from a landmark "peace jirga" of 700 delegates that met in the Afghan capital in August to discuss how to defeat the common threat of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which is waging an insurgency in Afghanistan.

Both countries pledged at the jirga to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries in their tribal regions and to fight the opium trade financing Islamic militants.

"Next month's meeting will be to discuss progress in implementing the decisions taken in Kabul," interior ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed Cheema told AFP.

The makeup of the council was finalised during talks in Islamabad this week headed by Pakistan Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao and Afghan deputy chairman of the jirga monitoring commission, Farooq Wardak.

The council comprises 25 members from the tribal areas of both nations, officials said this week. The date of the meeting has not yet been set.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf conceded at the August jirga that there was support from Pakistani tribal areas for the insurgency in Afghanistan, extremism and "Talibanisation" -- the spread of the Taliban's strictly Islamist doctrine.

The Taliban have been fighting the insurgency since their regime was removed from power in a US-led invasion in 2001.

The jirga brought together tribal leaders, parliamentarians, clerics and other influential figures from both sides of the border.

However, tribal leaders from lawless Waziristan in Pakistan boycotted the meeting because it did not include the Taliban.

Fierce clashes erupted between Pakistani troops and militants in Waziristan earlier this month, killing 250 people.

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AFP 240937 GMT 10 07

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Edmonton Journal

Minglewood heading in new direction

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: D3

Section: Culture

Byline: Peter North

Dateline: EDMONTON

Source: Freelance

Illustrations: Photo: Journal Stock / (Matt) Minglewood

EDMONTON - Blues-rocker Matt Minglewood has been heading east more than west of late, thus the lengthy gaps between visits to Edmonton.

So where does a Cape Breton boy head when the compass points east and the local road meets the ocean a few kilometres from your porch? In Minglewood's case, on tours organized by the Canadian Forces, meaning gigs in both Afghanistan and Egypt.

"I've been to Kandahar twice and you can't believe how much entertainers mean to the troops. It's a real break for them to have their focus taken off the duties at hand for a couple of hours.

"It's not quite as intense an experience playing Egypt," where the troops are in a peacekeeping mode.

"But there are moments, like when I bumped into one of the twin sons of a friend. I have known this soldier since he was a kid; it was an emotional reunion."

The pride of North Sydney, N.S., was signed to RCA in the '70s in part for his ability to craft memorable songs such as *Me and The Boys*, which was recorded by the Charlie Daniels Band.

Minglewood, who plays at the Atlantic Trap and Gill tonight at 8, is writing new songs for his first album since his all acoustic affair *The Story*, which was released in 2005.

"At this stage of the career, it's about working with people I trust. We have been working at Gordie Sampson's studio and I really trust his opinion," he says of his buddy, who has written hit tunes for Keith Urban, Carrie Underwood and Bon Jovi.

"For a guy who hasn't had airplay in a long time, the loyalty of my audience is amazing. I play the tunes that make me feel good, like *Can't You See*, *Dorchester* and *Rockin' the Blues*," says the 60-year-old bandleader.

Advance tickets were snapped up, but 50 tickets will be available at the door at 6 p.m. for \$25.

The Atlantic Trap and Gill is at 7704 104th St.

CBC.CA Video

Canada's Afghan role 'critical' to Pakistan's future: Bhutto

Broadcast Date: Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Network: CBC

Former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto urged Canada on Tuesday to stay the course in Afghanistan, as a fresh threat on her life arrived the same day, underscoring her message about the need to rid her country of extremists.

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Cape Breton Post

Defence minister in uncomfortable position at NATO meeting

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: B6

Section: International

Source: CP

With wavering European allies showing signs of sticking it out in Afghanistan, Defence Minister Peter MacKay will be in an uncomfortable position today as he meets with NATO counterparts.

The best he will be able to officially tell members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is that Canada's role and future commitment to the war-torn country is up the air beyond February 2009.

"There's no question the government wants to see Canada stay in Afghanistan longer," said Liberal Senator Colin Kenny, head of the Senate Security and Defence Committee, said in an interview from Ottawa.

"But their hands are tied. The best they'll be able to say is Parliament will be debating this matter and voting on it very shortly and right now it doesn't look good."

The Dutch government, after several postponed deadlines, is likely to approve within days an extension beyond 2008 of the country's deployment in Uruzgan, a restive province north of Kandahar - albeit with a smaller contingent.

This week, the head of the Dutch military recommended the country stay but reduce its troop commitment by about 600 to 1,200 soldiers.

The lower house of the German parliament recently renewed the commitment to keep that country's battle group of 3,500 in the relatively quiet northern sector of Mazar-e-Sharif, saying they have to fight threats beyond their borders.

Canada, with its commitment to review the mission under the auspices of an independent panel, could end up being the odd man out if former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley's group recommends something other than the status quo of continuing the mission.

Canada has about 2,500 troops serving with NATO's International Security Assistance Force, ISAF. Most of them are in Kandahar province, a Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan.

Since 2002, 71 Canadian military personnel and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan.

The Canadian government is under public and opposition pressure to bring the troops home.

None of the NATO partners want to be seen as the first one to roll back their commitment or even use the phrase exit strategy, said senior alliance officials

who asked not to be named.

U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates cranked up the pressure even further on Monday, saying he's not satisfied with the inability of NATO countries to meet their troop and equipment commitments.

MacKay was not available Tuesday to comment.

He is expected to meet separately with his German, French and Dutch counterparts at the NATO meeting this week in Noordwijk, a sleepy seaside community near Amsterdam.

In the recent throne speech, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives suggested Canada's direct involvement in Afghanistan should continue until 2011, two years past the current deadline.

NDP defence critic Dawn Black said she believes sending that sort of signal to NATO prior to the informal defence ministers' meeting will only prompt partners to ignore MacKay if he trots out the government's complaint that Canada is shouldering too much of the burden of fighting the Taliban.

"Getting other countries to participate in the combat mission is a tough sell, but we've just given away our leverage," Black said. "Signalling that we're willing to stay is weakening our bargaining position."

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Cape Breton Post

A federal election is coming, later if not sooner

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A6

Section: Comment

Byline: Johnson, David

In last week's Speech from the Throne the Conservative government of Stephen Harper outlined five policy priorities for the upcoming parliamentary session: promoting Canadian sovereignty, enhancing Canada's economic performance, strengthening the federation, tackling crime, and improving environmental standards.

In pursuit of these objectives the Harper government has already tabled an omnibus "get tough on crime" bill, and has signaled that it will be promoting a further round of tax cuts, inclusive of another one percentage point cut to the GST, costing roughly \$5.5 billion on foregone revenue.

The government will also be stepping up the Canadian military presence in the high arctic, arguing for at least a two-year extension on our Afghanistan mission, and promoting "intensity-based" targets as a means of regulating CO2 emissions and combating global warming.

While the NDP and the Bloc Quebecois have announced they will be voting against the Throne Speech, which requires a vote of confidence in the government, the federal Liberal party, under the leadership of Stephane Dion, will ultimately allow the Throne Speech to pass, on the grounds that Canadians do now want another election, at least not this fall.

Many commentators have suggested that such a position by the Liberals indicates a profound weakness in the party in that they are fearful of precipitating an election that they would likely lose, getting drubbed in Quebec in the process, and resulting in a humiliating defeat for Dion. The better part of valour, so the conventional Liberal wisdom now goes, is to allow the current government to stand, but to prepare for an election next spring.

And an election is coming, later if not sooner. The prime minister has already indicated that all legislation in pursuit of Throne Speech goals understandably will be matters of confidence due to their being key governmental policy priorities. Defeat on any single item will precipitate the fall of the government and an immediate election. As such, though the Liberals will be able to support the crime bill, they will have real problems endorsing the government's environmental legislation. And it may very well be that Dion and company would welcome a governmental defeat and an election campaign on environmental policy.

Another matter to pay attention to is the federal spending power. As mentioned in previous columns, this power is the constitutional ability of the federal

government to launch national social-welfare programs in areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as health, education and social policy, through the establishment of joint federal-provincial agreements supported by federal spending.

The federal spending power has given this country our national health care system, the Canada Pension Plan, and our system of post-secondary education.

Under the previous Liberal administration of Paul Martin, that government was in the preliminary stages of establishing a national day care system in tandem with the provinces, also courtesy of the federal spending power. Upon coming to power in 2006, the Harper government killed these plans, establishing a child care allowance in its place.

If the Liberals wish to shift the policy debate away from Stephen Harper's preferred issues to terrain more historically suited to Liberal values, interests, and voting behaviour, Stephane Dion would be well advised to think creatively in promoting new usages of the federal spending power. This country still needs a national day care system, designed in collaboration with the provinces (and allowing for Quebec to maintain its own comparable "national" system), and substantially funded by the federal government.

Likewise, this country needs a national pharmacare program to augment the Canada Health Act by providing financial coverage for medically-prescribed pharmaceuticals. And, as I have long argued in these pages, this country could well use an enhanced national system of post-secondary college and university funding to allow for the reduction and eventual abolition of tuition fees.

All such programs, moreover, would be affordable if we were prepared to place our priorities on investment in social infrastructure rather than tax cuts.

For a country running record surpluses following a decade of major tax cuts, we possess the luxury of being able to make policy choices regarding social and economic priorities. If Stephane Dion and the federal Liberals seek relevance, respect and rejuvenation, look to see them go beyond the environmental file and engage in a debate about the future of the federal spending power and the national leadership role of the federal government in improving the quality of life for Canadians. To do so would be for Dion to reclaim the mantle of policy visionary with which he entered political life.

(David Johnson is a professor of political science at

the Cape Breton University. His column and those of his colleagues, Jim Guy, Darrell Kyte and Brian Howe appear weekly on this page. We welcome your comments on this column or any other material appearing in the Post. You can write c/o Letters to the Editor, Cape Breton Post, 255 George St., PO Box 1500, Sydney N.S. B1P 6K6; Fax to (902) 562-7077 or e-mail to letters@cbpost.com or david_johnson@capebretonu.ca)

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Collingwood Enterprise-Bulletin (On)

Memoirs re-ignite old political battles

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: A6
Section: Opinion

Political memoirs are popping up on bookshelves like mushrooms it seems, and in many cases, the medium from which they sprout seems to resemble that of the humble mushroom. In the past month, we saw the self-aggrandizing exercise of Brian Mulroney, massaging his own ego and assailing his old foes through 1,152 pages of his tome, "Memoirs." Now, Jean Chretien gives his take on his life as prime minister in "My Years as Prime Minister" in a mercifully shorter book of 448 pages. There's a similar thread that runs through the pair of them and that is that retirement from the highest political office in the land has not mellowed either man nor blunted their bitterness for old enemies.

In Mulroney's case, it was Pierre Elliott Trudeau who continues to haunt the former Conservative prime minister. For Chretien, his enemies were closer at hand - fellow card-carrying members of the Liberal party he'd led for 13 years.

Where Mulroney slagged Trudeau for being lily-livered during Canada's war years, Chretien derided his successor Paul Martin as a prime minister who dithered and dallied as Canada's Afghanistan mission slid into a plunge headlong into the "killing fields" of Kandahar. It was quickly shown, by various accounts including a new book co-authored by Belleville native Eugene Lang Jr., that Chretien's assessment was dead wrong, but it shows that the so-called "Little Guy from Shawinigan" still carries a big chip on his shoulder for Martin.

That passage has distressed a number of members of not only the military, former governments and members of Chretien's own party, but family members of those killed or fighting in Afghanistan. But, it wasn't just on the war in Afghanistan that Martin's reputation is taking a battering in Chretien's memoirs.

On the issue of the Kyoto Protocol, Chretien devotes a considerable amount of his memoirs to his decision to ratify the accord and to commit Canada to taking part in its global warming reduction initiatives. But, while Chretien did indeed promote the adoption of the multi-national agreement, neither his government nor that of Martin did anything concrete to meet the emission cuts spelled out in the accord.

Under Chretien, the Liberals won elections for three consecutive majority governments. But, the very attributes that made him successful in the political arena, his scrappy manner and every-man persona, seem to have coloured his memoirs as much as his terms in office, but in an offending way.

Where he was seen as a fighter for Canada on the separatist front, he now runs the risk of being seen as

a bitter former politician who delights in pouring salt on old wounds.

History generally looks kindly on individuals who have achieved as much, politically, as did Chretien. But he and Mulroney, in devoting so much of their memoirs to re-igniting old battles, do little but sully the office they once proudly held by showing their pettiness once back in private life.

Collingwood Enterprise-Bulletin (On)

Local MP not eager for another election

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A3

Section: Local News

Byline: Shawn Giiilck

Illustrations: Helena Guergis Simcoe-Grey MP

Helena Guergis says she "doesn't want another election."

The Simcoe-Grey MPP and junior cabinet minister is throwing her unabashed support behind last week's Throne Speech from the federal government. Guergis said bluntly she liked what she heard from her political boss, Steven Harper.

"I'm not in favour of an election, I'm in favour of governing," she said in a telephone interview last week. "I'm voting in favour of the Throne Speech and against having an election. There's a number of things that I really like."

Guergis pointed to Harper's efforts to re-assert sovereignty in the Arctic, tackling crime, and a proposed two-year extension of the military mission in Afghanistan. She also mentioned the party's renewed focus on the environment.

"We have a clear plan in place and will be proceeding with it. I'm very excited about that," she said.

She pointed to the Conservative record on the environment, including the recognition of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney as the "greenest" leader in Canadian history, as indications of what the party's accomplished.

"I'm proud of our record and I'll put our record up against any of the other party's any day of the week," Guergis said.

She grumbled about the media coverage of the Afghanistan mission as she defended the decision to extend the troop presence until 2011.

Guergis said the successes of the mission have been obscured by the tumult over the mounting Canadian casualties.

There would be more public support for the mission if those "good things" came to the forefront.

She also scoffed at the idea that the panel created to examine the extension of the mission didn't have any military representation.

The Armed Forces are "not to be a part of the political decision," she said.

"I think it's a very intelligent decision to make."

Edmonton Journal

Exploring Vimy's personal stories; Vern Thiessen's new play examines relationships forged after key battle

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: D1 / FRONT

Section: Culture

Byline: Liz Nicholls

Dateline: EDMONTON

Source: The Edmonton Journal

Illustrations: Colour Photo: David Cooper, Supplied / Actor Sheldon Elter in a scene from the new play Vimy, which premieres at the Citadel Theatre on Thursday night.

VIMY

Theatre: Citadel

Written by: Vern Thiessen

Directed by: James MacDonald

Starring: Mat Busby, Sheldon Elter, Phil Fulton, Vincent Hoss-Desmarais, Billy MacLellan, Daniela Vlaskalic

Running: Thursday through Nov. 11

Tickets and info: 425-1820

- - -

EDMONTON - When the Chorus famously asks for "a muse of fire" at the start of Shakespeare's war epic Henry V, he's working himself up to a manifesto of live theatre. Can vast human events, like war, be contained on a stage, in a circumscribed forum populated by a few actors?

The answer is in the play, of course, which opens a caseament on a particularly senseless overseas war by chronicling the rise of a leader. The play getting its world premiere Thursday at the Citadel explores the experience of war, the aftermath of the massively costly 1917 battle for a hellish patch of Euro-mud called Vimy Ridge, through the individual memories, long- and short-term, of four wounded Canadian soldiers and their nurse.

In an age of epic movie and TV documentary, with their appetite (and capacity) for verisimilitude, the tendency is to take a cue from the carnivorous machinery of war itself, and throw bodies at the audience. Vimy, the much-awaited new play by Citadel playwright-in-residence Vern Thiessen, isn't like that, says director James MacDonald. Its muse of fire is theatrical.

"For a visceral sense of ongoing carnage, you could never compete with Saving Private Ryan," says MacDonald, who starred as Henry V in a cunningly staged Free Will production a few summers ago. "This isn't Passchendaele," Paul Gross's First World War epic being shot just outside Calgary. Curiously, Theatre Calgary launched its season last month with a new First World War play, too -- Dennis Garnhum's adaptation of the Timothy Findley novel The Wars.

"What I love about doing Vimy onstage, what works better in a theatre than on film, is that it's personal stories," says director MacDonald, whose connection with the play goes back to workshops of a year ago. "It's about what happens to the characters, yes, but it contextualizes the events of war: it's about the relationships the characters forge in the aftermath of the battle. It's about their memories.... There's an epic feel, but it's about telling the story of a small corner of a very large experience.

"At heart," says MacDonald, "that story is simple: young people going to war. Vern based his characters on real people he found researching war diaries, books like Pierre Berton's, biographies. ... Some are composites; some are fictional versions." If the Battle for Vimy Ridge announces the official entrance of the concept "Canadian" onto the world stage, the play named after it reflects the multicultural breadth of that identity. There's an aboriginal character, a French Canadian, a Maritimer. ... In that period, the war might well have been the first time their paths would cross.

It's paralleled in MacDonald's cross-country casting, which includes Métis actor Sheldon Elter, Montrealer Vincent Hoss-Desmarais and Nova Scotian Billy MacLellan. "We wanted actors very at ease in their characters," says MacDonald. "The production (co-designed by Bretta Gerecke and Narda McCarroll) is stylized, theatrical. But the dialogue is naturalistic."

Vimy isn't the first time the playwright has turned his attention to the cataclysmic damages of the First World War. The flawed hero of Einstein's Gift, which premiered at the Citadel in 2003, is Fritz Haber, a Nobel Prize-winning German chemist whose discovery of nitrogen fixation had a tragic application: the chlorine gas unleashed at Ypres. "Einstein's Gift was about invention," says MacDonald, who played narrator/observer Einstein, another conflicted scientist, in that production. "A lot of the design (by Gerecke) was about imagination and invention; the protagonists were creative people." The themes of Vimy give it a much different look onstage. "One theme is the land, the earth -- both the patch (the Canadian soldiers) need to take, and their flashbacks of the Canada they left," says MacDonald.

"The other big theme is memory; how it works, how we remember, how we resist memory. The flashbacks get triggered by little things that happen in the

present of the play, the hospital."

Montreal-born MacDonald, a military history buff who was a history major before he succumbed to the lure of theatre, concedes the temptation to read into Vimy a parallel between Canada's experiences in the First World War and Afghanistan. Resist it, he says.

"Vimy focuses on the personal rather than the political. Should Canada be in Afghanistan or not? Nothing like that. This isn't a profoundly antiwar play, nor is it a glorification of war."

A "personal sense" of nation-building does emerge, however, says MacDonald, who rehearsed Vimy by day while substituting (for his friend John Kirkpatrick) in another kind of war zone, the ultra-farce Noises Off, by night. Vimy Ridge was "the first time all four Canadian divisions fought together in the war, as the main offensive force," for example.

That cohesiveness is telling. As all plays aim to do, "Vimy shows us something we can identify with, something about us."

lnicholls@thejournal.canwest.com

LEST WE FORGET

To win a DVD copy of History Television's production Vimy Ridge: Heaven to Hell, send your name and phone number(s) to tickets@thejournal.canwest.com by noon Thursday. One entry per person please.

Edmonton Journal

Caption Only

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A2

Section: News

Source: Reuters

Illustrations: Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / UNDER FIRE IN AFGHANISTAN: Canadian soldiers from the NATO-led coalition ...

Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / ... and Afghan National Army troops were hit ...

Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / ... Tuesday by Taliban shells fired from an 82-millimetre recoilless rifle ...

Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / ... during an ambush in Zhari district of Kandahar province, ...

Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / ... southern Afghanistan. ...

Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / ... One Canadian soldier was lightly wounded and an Afghan soldier was shot in the shoulder during the fight.

NO TEXT

The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

More threats won't stop Bhutto from campaigning

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A10

Section: News

Byline: MATTHEW PENNINGTON The Associated Press

Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto said Tuesday she had received a new death threat but will start campaigning in Pakistani cities in the next couple days, avoiding mass rallies.

Taliban.

© 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

Five days after the suicide bombing that killed at least 136 at her homecoming procession in Karachi, Bhutto said her lawyer received a letter from an unidentified "friend of al-Qaida" threatening to slaughter her "like a goat."

Bhutto said the letter was addressed to her lawyer, Farooq Naik, and had been left for him at the Supreme Court in Islamabad. She said Naik was alerting the chief justice of the threat.

"There are elements who want who to kill us," Bhutto said at her heavily guarded residence in this southern city. "They are petrified that the Pakistan People's Party will return (to power) and that democracy will return."

"They are trying to derail the democratic process because they know if the people are employed and educated the forces of extremism and terrorism will be weakened," she said.

The authenticity of the letter could not be confirmed. Bhutto said the writer claimed to be the "head of the suicide bombers and a friend of al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden."

Bhutto returned Thursday from eight years in exile to campaign for parliamentary elections due in January, after months of talks with President Gen. Pervez Musharraf that could see them working side-by-side in the next government.

She said that after discussions, her party had decided she should avoid staging mass rallies because of the risk of suicide and roadside bombings, but would still address public meetings.

"The party decided I should go from Karachi to Islamabad, Lahore or Larkana (Bhutto's hometown) in the next couple of days. We will be not be holding public rallies but will be travelling to meet the people in other provinces," she said.

Bhutto has blamed alleged extremist elements in the government and the security apparatus for the bombing that ripped through Thursday's rally in Karachi -- claims the government denies.

She alleges they include remnants of the regime of former military leader Gen. Zia-ul Haq, who oversaw mujahedeen groups that fought the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, and then became

The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

Dirt-dishing PMs degrade their own records

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: B7

Section: Opinion

Byline: Michael Staples THE MILITARY

It's little wonder people are thumbing their noses at politicians these days and showing little in the political process.

The recent release of books by Brian Mulroney and Jean Chretien, in which they unleash vicious attacks on former prime ministers, is a reminder of everything that is wrong with Canadian politics today.

Both of these individuals, former first ministers themselves, have turned into bitter, hostile and venomous old men.

Chretien's most recent attack against Paul Martin is beyond petty. If it weren't so sad, it would be laughable.

In his book, *My Years as Prime Minister*, Chretien describes his former rival within the Liberal Party as being responsible for Canadian troops serving in what he calls the killing fields around Kandahar.

All of this, according to Chretien, because Martin took too long to make a decision.

Chretien, prime minister from 1993 to 2003, recalled that after the fall of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, he carefully orchestrated events so Canadian soldiers would be stationed in and around Kabul, considered a safer area.

"Later, unfortunately, when my successor took too long to make up his mind about whether Canada should extend our term with the International Security Assistance Force, our soldiers were moved out of Kabul and sent south again to battle the Taliban in the killing fields around Kandahar," Chretien writes.

What purpose does this type of posturing actually serve?

By going after Martin in such a manner, Chretien is also attacking the families of soldiers who lost loved ones when the mission switched focus.

These people believed they were making a difference and paid the ultimate sacrifice in serving their country.

It's tacky and petty politics and detracts from the book which should have been a celebration of Chretien's accomplishments.

But this is what too often happens when people get a taste of power.

Instead of fondly remembering the once popular figure, who was known for his "straight from the heart" talk, we will remember Chretien the author who is sarcastic and insulting.

As the old saying goes, there is more than one way to skin a cat and Chretien, if he had issues with Martin, could have taken the high road and questioned his leadership in a more diplomatic manner.

But the pettiness did not stop with Chretien's cheap shots.

In Brian Mulroney's book of memoirs released early last month, he unleashed a scathing attack on the late Pierre Trudeau, of all people.

In one excerpt, Mulroney attacks Trudeau for destroying Mulroney's cherished Meech Lake accord, aimed at gaining Quebec's signature on the Constitution.

Mulroney, who served as Tory prime minister from 1984-93, questioned Trudeau's fitness to provide moral leadership, resurrecting tales of the former leader's refusal as a youth to fight the Nazis. He also brings up the findings of two recent biographies, recounting the youthful Trudeau's apparent admiration for fascist dictators, including Adolf Hitler, his anti-Semitic and anti-immigration views and his initial belief in the virtue of an independent Quebec populated strictly by Francophones.

"Pierre Trudeau, Captain Canada? I think not," Mulroney concludes.

Mulroney's rants provided a field day of opportunities for political cartoonists, as they portrayed a man willing to take on Trudeau only after he was dead and could not defend himself.

No doubt, both Chretien and Mulroney's goal was to sell books. They should do quite well. That's fitting given how often greed is now mentioned in the same breath with politics.

What is sad, however, is that both leaders served Canada well in their own way and achieved many things that benefitted Canadians. It's unfortunate their tongues became acerbic and their personalities acidic.

Shame on both.

Michael Staples is a reporter/editor with The Daily Gleaner. His column on the people and happenings of this world appears every other Wednesday.

The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

Letters | Station hub of tourism plan

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: B6
Section: Opinion

This paper has charged concerned citizens with providing a solution to the decay of York Street train station.

Our political and corporate leaders give us every reason why the building is dying but have no viable answers. The building is fated to collapse if action is not soon taken.

We are told city council cannot act as the building is private property and governed by federal legislation. J.D. Irving Ltd. has also passed the buck; until viable commercial opportunities exist, they have no ability to refurbish the property. Both organizations hint that developments are imminent, yet nothing has appeared.

The debate over heritage properties is not new to Fredericton. This spring, council made a big show of trying to save York House from demolition, right up to considering buying the property to create more office space for city hall.

They had no problem speaking out against the little guys, a congregation pressed for space and money. However, when it's time to talk tough to the biggest kid on the provincial block, council is deathly quiet.

This paper reiterated these facts in a recent editorial. The editorial places the duty to provide solutions with individual citizens, rather than with elected officials and the property's owners.

As our leaders have abstained from action, I'll take a stab at it: Imagine the city, the province, and J.D. Irving Ltd. teaming up to redevelop the station as Fredericton's tourist hub. What better place to welcome visitors to our city than the very building that served that purpose for decades?

There would be ample parking in the vacant lots surrounding the station site, and it is within view of the newly renovated Hartt Shoe Factory and York House. Tourists could visit the station and discover that the Garrison District, the Legislature, and Old Government House all fall within a short walk, mostly along redeveloped rail bed. The station would anchor a trail network based on former railway and rail-bridges.

The marketing campaign writes itself.

The provincial government recently created a Provincial Capital Commission, charged with protecting New Brunswick's cultural heritage, and developing tourism opportunities. This project is tailor made for the commission.

This station was once the heart of our city. Royalty

and prime ministers stepped into Fredericton's history through this building. Students from across Canada entered academia through this building. Frederictonians ventured into the outside world through this building.

It's time for the York Street train station to welcome the world back to Fredericton.

Robert Hoadley

Fredericton

Keep Sunday hunting ban

It is with regret that I heard that the province is seriously considering allowing hunting on Sundays

Being a small-business owner, Sundays are often the only day I get out into the woods for recreational pursuits: hiking; taking our dogs for an extended walk; running; and orienteering.

Many other people also enjoy these, as well as the increasingly popular mountain biking and geocaching. These activities are especially attractive in the fall, thus typically coinciding with the hunting season.

The purpose of this e-mail is to request hunting not be allowed on Sundays for the benefit of the majority of people who should be encouraged to live a healthy outdoor lifestyle, not be concerned about being shot while engaging in their outdoor pursuits.

Stig Skarborn

Fredericton

Thanks for former students

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the open house held on Sept. 16 in recognition of my retirement from Crawley's Preschool.

Susan Booker of Burtts Corner Lioness Club initiated the idea and gathered assistance from other organizations and friends to make it a wonderful event.

Thanks to the Keswick Valley Recreation Council for the use of the building, the Lioness Club for the lovely cake and all the friends and family who brought food.

I am especially grateful to all the former students and their families who stopped by to visit with me and for the photos and notes for my scrapbook.

I miss my "kids" very much, but I hope all of them feel free to keep in touch with me. Again my thanks to all of you for a day I will always remember.

Madelyn Crawley

Burtt's Corner, N.B.

Afghanistan too costly

A recent letter to the editor stated that by the end of this year Canada will have spent \$600 million in Afghanistan.

The peace movement of Fredericton, challenging the yellow ribbon campaign as government propaganda, is smeared and belittled.

We must look to our own country. In New Brunswick alone, there are more than 50 food banks. One soup kitchen in Moncton stated it has served more than a million meals to the hungry. In Canada, we have unknown thousands living in the streets and millions in sub-standard dwellings.

How can we afford \$600 million outside our borders? Should Afghans really want to use us as a model to build their country knowing we don't even take care of our own?

Supporters of the military say we need not support the war, only the soldiers. Phooey! How do you separate the two?

For one thing, those are hard-earned taxpayer dollars paying for this war. When were we, as a collective, asked if we wanted to spend them in this way?

Are we really good neighbours, or are we on foreign soil for bogus reasons?

Canadian troops were peacekeepers not so long ago. Why do we not send Canadian troops to be peacekeepers and helpers where we might actually help without killing or being killed. There are certainly enough countries in need.

Could it be that those countries don't have oil. Or if they do, they don't sell it for Euros, but for American dollars. Let the spin doctors spin, a slew of us know what it's all really about.

Richard Doiron

Moncton, N.B.

Thanks for great coverage

Recently the Nashwaaksis United Church held a very successful forum entitled Care Connections: Seniors' Issues.

We would like to thank our guest speakers, those who attended and a special thank you to The Daily Gleaner for the excellent coverage.

George Feenstra

Beverley Plume

Fredericton

Matching the Celtic tiger

Finance Minister Victor Boudreau has said he is cautious about cutting business taxes to stimulate economic growth.

Irish economist Brendan Walsh has suggested this approach fuelled a resurgence in his country.

In 2006 I spent some time in Ireland on several consulting assignments. The signs of a vibrant economy were very clear: a construction boom; rapid increases in real estate costs and wages; overstretched infrastructure; strong sales figures for luxury automobiles and labour shortages satisfied by immigrants from eastern Europe.

Such a taxation paradise would be every finance minister's dream. But, is the way to get there as simple as cutting taxes?

Unfortunately, it is not.

Other factors actually gave Ireland its opportunity. The country's economy was unable to employ everyone who was employable, so over decades they left in large numbers for jobs elsewhere. International companies such as IBM and Apple found in the Irish people what they knew would ensure success if they invested in that country. The Irish were highly literate, well-educated and exhibited a strong work ethic.

Unfortunately, international investors would not find the same conditions in New Brunswick. Fortunately, Boudreau's colleagues in the departments of education and post-secondary education, training and labour are taking steps to address our literacy and education challenges.

Cutting business taxes prematurely would weaken the government's capacity to carry on programs that will strengthen the skills of our people and give the province a chance to succeed in the long run.

Jim Wolstenholme

Fredericton

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Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Hopeful for Cornyn's Senate seat drops out, cites family concerns

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 1

Section: B

Byline: By JOHN MORITZ, Star-Telegram staff writer

AUSTIN -- Democrat Mikal Watts, a trial lawyer with the resources to devote millions of dollars from his own fortune to wrest the U.S. Senate seat from first-term Republican John Cornyn, shut down his campaign Tuesday saying the rigors of the upcoming race were placing too great a strain on his family.

"After spending the last several months putting everything into this campaign, I have seen the toll this effort has taken on my young children," Watts said in a statement that surprised political watchers. "For these reasons, my wife and I have made the decision that I will not be seeking the Democratic nomination for the United States Senate in 2008."

Watts, a generous financial supporter of Democrats at the state and federal levels, was in his first race for elective office. Spending the past few months touring Texas had kept him away from his two daughters, ages 13 and 11, and 9-year-old son. The family had recently moved from Corpus Christi to San Antonio.

The midmorning announcement appeared to have cleared the Democratic field for state Rep. Rick Noriega. The five-term Houston lawmaker is running largely on his record of National Guard service, which included a year in Afghanistan and a stint as the coordinator for Hurricane Katrina evacuees relocated to Harris County two years ago.

Noriega, a darling of many Democratic bloggers in Austin and Houston, praised his one-time rival for stepping up to take on a Republican incumbent in a state that hasn't elected a Democrat to a statewide office in more than a dozen years.

"As Teddy Roosevelt once said, the credit goes to the man in the arena," said Noriega, 49, adding that he plans to meet with Watts within the next few weeks. "And Mikal Watts will always have my utmost respect for standing in the arena and highlighting how John Cornyn has let Texas down, placing political extremists and his financial contributors ahead of the people of Texas."

The Cornyn camp, meanwhile, offered a backhanded salute to Watts while touting the senator's conservative record during his tenure.

"Senator Cornyn respects Mikal Watts' decision and will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of Texans advocating for lower taxes, less government spending, greater access to healthcare and stronger national security, and looks forward to running on that record regardless of who his opponent is," said spokesman Rob Jesmer.

Noriega and Watts appeared to have been looking

past their showdown in the March 4 primary and were instead concentrating their fire on Cornyn, who lags far behind fellow Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison in popularity and name recognition.

But Nathan Gonzales, political editor for the Washington, D.C., newsletter The Rothenberg Political Report, said that despite Cornyn's relatively soft appeal, he appears to have the upper hand heading into campaign season. A spirited primary, he said, could have helped raise the profile of the still largely unknown Democrats.

"The good news for Noriega at this point is that it allows the Democrats to unite around him and focus their energy against Cornyn," said Gonzales, who is tracking all 34 contested U.S. Senate races next year. "I expect the Democrats at the national level to try and help Rick Noriega get a little buzz going that will help him raise money."

Watts had more than \$8 million in his campaign account. Most of it came from his own pockets, earned from suing corporate giants such as Ford and Firestone in product-liability cases. Cornyn's account balance heading into October was \$6.6 million, compared with Noriega's \$510,000.

Online: www.ricknoriega.com

www.johncornyn.com

Throne speech survives, Liberal amendment fails

Section: Canada
Broadcast Date: Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Time: Mon October 22 21:03:17 2007 EDT
Network: CBC

The Conservative minority government easily survived its second major challenge when the Bloc Québécois and NDP combined with the Tories Monday evening to defeat a Liberal amendment.

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The amendment, defeated by a vote of 203-89, blamed the Conservatives' "inaction" for Canada failing to meet its Kyoto target, and urged the government to take "real action" to catch up in the second phase of Kyoto.

It also restated the Liberal party's position that the Canadian combat mission in Kandahar must end by February 2009 and called on the House to recognize the "good work" of past Liberal programs in fighting poverty.

The motion, the second of three related to the throne speech, was a confidence vote, meaning its passage would have triggered an election.

However, political observers say the motion was written in a way to ensure its defeat because the Liberals are not ready to go to the polls.

The NDP, for example, could not support the motion because it has been insistent that Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan end immediately.

BQ amendment fails

Last Tuesday night's throne speech laid out the Conservative party's agenda for the parliamentary session that included promises for major tax cuts, a vote to extend the Afghan mission until at least 2011 and new crime legislation. It also reiterated the Tories' position that Canada cannot meet the greenhouse gas targets of the Kyoto Protocol.

Last Thursday, a Bloc Québécois amendment to the throne speech failed after the Liberals and NDP joined the Tories to vote it down.

The sub-amendment criticized "the inaction of the Liberal and Conservative governments" over efforts to curb greenhouse gas emission.

It also demanded an end to Ottawa's spending power in areas controlled by the provinces, and called for concrete measures to help workers affected by Quebec's forestry crisis.

The final vote on the main throne speech comes Wednesday. Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion had said last week that if the Liberal amendment failed to pass, his MPs would abstain from voting, meaning it would pass.

South Korean president calls for Iraq mission extension

Section: World
Broadcast Date: Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Time: Tue October 23 16:11:13 2007 EDT
Network: CBC

South Korea plans to keep its soldiers in Iraq for till the end of 2008, but will bring home half of the contingent by year's end, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun announced Tuesday.

In a televised address, Roh said the government would move a proposal to extend the mission and keep 600 of the country's 1,200 troops in Iraq through December 2008.

The mission was due to expire at the end of this year, but Roh said the government reconsidered upon weighing the importance of supporting its ally the United States.

Washington wants South Korea to stay in Iraq past this year, and the Iraqi government as well as the local government where Korean troops are stationed also want the troops to remain, Roh said. The 1,200 troops are currently posted to a relatively safe Kurdish region of the country.

"We're at a time when we need close co-operation with the United States more than any other time," Roh said, citing Seoul's efforts to resolve the international standoff over North Korea's nuclear weapons program and to improve relations with Pyongyang.

After the U.S. and Britain, South Korea contributed the third-largest contingent of occupation forces in Iraq, starting off with 3,600 troops there in 2004. Because of public disfavour with the mission, the government has gradually scaled back its troops numbers.

South Korea also has 200 soldiers deployed for reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, from which it plans to withdraw by the end of the year.

Roh needs a majority vote in parliament to approve the extension of the Iraq mission.

With files from the Associated Press

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Bbc Monitoring South Asia

Several militants killed in central Afghanistan - US troops

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by PAJHWO Afghan independent
Pajhwok news agency website

Kabul, 23 October: Several militants were killed and two detained in a firefight with Coalition troops in the central restive province of Maydan Wardag late Tuesday evening, the US military said on Wednesday [24 October].

Coalition forces made their way to compounds in the Nerkh District, where intelligence sources indicated rebels were hiding, the military said in a statement mailed to Pajhwok Afghan News.

During the course of operations, aimed to disrupt extremist activities in the province, militants opened fire on Coalition forces, according to the statement.

"While conducting operations in the Nerkh District, Coalition forces were attacked by several extremists, said Maj Chris Belcher, Combined Joint Task Force-82 spokesman. Targeting their attackers, Coalition forces returned fire, killing the militants."

The soldiers conducted a search of the immediate area, finding a weapons cache containing a number of explosive materials and ammunition. The weapons cache was removed to prevent future use by militant forces, the Coalition said.

Resuming their search of the compounds, the troops detained two individuals, intelligence sources indicated as having ties to militant forces. The individuals will be questioned as to their involvement with militant forces.

Calgary Herald

Only at calgaryherald.com

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A2

Section: News

Source: Calgary Herald

Illustrations: Photo: Nancy Tousley

Photo: Naomi Lakritz

Battle Zone

Dispatches from Afghanistan

Herald reporter Kelly Cryderman is on her way to Kandahar. Read her daily blogs from on the ground.

Ed TV

- Premier Ed Stelmach will use his fireside chat with Albertans tonight to hint at where he's going with royalty rates. We'll post a full report after his speech.

Flames Bites

- See the Game Day report and video from the morning practice on Heraldhockey.com as the Flames try to rebound from Monday's loss when they face Minnesota.

Photo Galleries

- The many faces of George Stroumboulopoulos, who was in town to receive an honorary degree from the University of Calgary.

AudioVideo

- Daily News Videos: We have the top news videos from Global Calgary featured on the Herald's home page.

Blogs

- Impressions: Nancy Tousley reports on the bite-size magic of Mark Lewis's four-minute films.

- Slices of Wry: Naomi Lakritz asks why it's such a big deal that a woman is commanding the shuttle mission.

Online Extras

Unique Content That Goes Beyond the Headlines

- News: Pilots association tells Air India inquiry that airport security has priorities mixed up.

- Sports: How opera started Rocket on road to greatness.

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Bbc Monitoring Media

Afghanistan: Reporter "beaten up" by deputy mayor

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by PAYAM Afghan newspaper Payam-e Mojahed

Last week near the Kabul Municipality compound, Sediq Afghan, standing on a wall, was chanting slogans against America and Kabul Municipality.

A reporter of Payam-e Mojahed weekly was passing by the area. When he noticed a gathering of people there, he went there to see what is going on.

Jawed Rastapor, reporter of Payam-e Mojahed weekly, says when he wanted to interview Mr Sediq Afghan, bodyguards of Mr [Gharzai] Khwakhagai, deputy mayor of Kabul in charge of city services, beat him up and forced him out of the municipality compound. This happened when Mr Khwakhagai was also in the scene and showed no reaction to the attack by his men.

The reporter says Mr Khwakhagai was watching when one of his bodyguards threw down the camera of the reporter and broke it.

Journalists have several times been beaten up and humiliated by government officials.

Mr Gharzai's bodyguards had no reason to force Rastapor out of the municipality compound.

A reporter of private Aina television was beaten up by security forces last year. Government forces arrested Mojahed Kakar [reporter of private Lemar television] some time ago.

A reporter of the Iranian E channel was arrested by ISAF [International Security Assistance Forces] a few days ago. No one has so far shown any reaction to such activities.

The ministry of culture and youth affairs has unfortunately not taken, and may not take, any measure in reaction to such cases.

Bbc Monitoring South Asia

Senator accuses Afghan, British troops of surrendering districts to Taleban

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by JOWAI Afghan independent Aina TV

[Presenter] Afghan and British troops have surrendered five districts of Helmand Province to the Taleban.

Abdol Wahed Karezwai, senator from Helmand Province, has said that the foreign troops do not have any programme to launch operation in the areas controlled by the Taleban, and civilians have always been killed during their air strikes. Currently, more than 8,000 British and 3,000 Afghan troops are deployed in Helmand Province.

[Correspondent] Currently, the Taleban control five districts as well as the outskirts of some other districts in the volatile province of Helmand. Senator from Helmand Province Abdol Wahed Karezwai accused the Afghan and British troops of surrendering these areas to the Taleban. He called on the Afghan government to deploy more foreign troops in the province in order to recapture the areas captured [by the Taleban].

[Abdol Wahed Karezwai, in Pashto] The Taleban are in full control of five out of the 13 districts of Helmand. These five districts are Khaneshin, [name indistinct] Washir, Baghran and Musa Qala. The government has limited control in some parts of Garmser, Sangin, Kajaki and Nawzad Districts. [Sentence indistinct]

[Correspondent] In addition, Mr Karezwai said that the security forces and the border police of Afghanistan were involved in smuggling, abductions and armed robbery, and described the areas controlled by the Taleban as the centre for production of drugs.

[Abdol Wahed Karezwai, in Pashto] Police are involved in abductions. They receive ransom in Lashkargah [the capital of Helmand Province] and release the abducted.

[Correspondent] Senate Speaker Sebghatollah Mojaddedi has also criticized the British troops for surrendering a number of districts of the province to the Taleban.

[Sebghatollah Mojaddedi, in Pashto] On the one hand, the British troops made a mistake and surrendered all districts of Helmand Province to the Taleban to rule.

[Correspondent] More than 8,000 British and 3,000 Afghan troops are deployed in Helmand Province, but it is considered as one of the most restive parts of Afghanistan.

The province accounts for 55 per cent of drugs produced in the country in 2006.

Bbc Monitoring South Asia

Afghan-Pak peace jerga officials discuss implementation of decisions

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by TVAFG Afghan state TV

[Presenter] Dr Faruq Wardag, leading an Afghan delegation, has travelled to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to follow up [the implementation of] recommendations made by the regional peace jerga. He had a meeting with Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao.

Speaking to my colleague Haydar Rezayi on the phone about results of the visit, Faruq Wardag said:

[Faruq Wardag] As you know, we travelled to Pakistan as part of a delegation yesterday. The main objective of our visit is to start the process of following up recommendations and decisions made during the joint regional peace jerga. The first recommendation that needed urgent follow up was the establishment of a mechanism based on which we could observe the implementation of jerga decisions. There were some other things to be done too. For instance, making preparations for the second round of the joint regional peace jerga, and visiting some insecure and unsafe areas, highlighting the causes of insecurity and finding ways out of the problems in those areas.

Today, we had a meeting with the commission assigned for this very purpose by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan - the commission responsible for the holding of the joint regional peace jerga - led by Mr Sherpao. The governors of Baluchistan and NWFP [North West Frontier Province] are members of the commission.

We presented the list of members of the Afghan mini jerga, which will oversee the implementation of the jerga decisions, to the Pakistani side. The members of the mini jerga have been appointed by His Excellency the president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. They promised that, in view of the composition of the Afghan list, they would prepare their list and send us in two or three days.

The second decision we made was that the mini jerga shall hold its first meeting in Islamabad in the first week of November. We have not yet chosen a specific date. After they send us their list, we can choose a specific date, but it will most probably be held in Islamabad in the first week or at the beginning of the second week of November.

The mini jerga will develop its working plan and follow up the jerga recommendations one after another based on priorities.

Bbc Monitoring South Asia

Central Asian states meet in Tajikistan to discuss regional cooperation

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by PAJHWO Afghan independent
Pajhwok news agency website

Manila, 24 October: Eight member countries of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) programme will discuss ways to deepen interaction and integrate more effectively with world markets at a meeting in Tajikistan early next month.

Bringing together ministers and senior officials from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, the two-day sixth ministerial conference of CAREC will be held in [Tajik capital] Dushanbe from 2-3 November.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) said senior representatives of CAREC's six- partner multilateral institutions (MI), bilateral and other regional organizations would also attend the meeting. Ministers will likely consider at the conference two wide-ranging initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation.

According to an ADB press release, the first initiative is the CAREC Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy, which would support the development of six strategic transport corridors criss-crossing the region, thereby improving access of these economies to each other and to global markets.

The press release said through trade facilitation, member countries would work to enhance the efficiency of trade as well as transparency and awareness of rules, regulations and procedures.

Craig Steffensen, head of ADB's CAREC Unit, said: These efforts will improve the flow of people and goods around the region and across borders, providing a firm foundation for sustained growth.

Establishment of the CAREC Institute, which will have two main purposes, is second initiative. The first is to enhance the capabilities of CAREC government officials to engage in regional cooperation processes and to plan and implement regional cooperation projects.

Secondly, the press release added, the institute would outline new approaches to regional challenges based on international best practices, empirical research and policy analysis.

Implementation of these strategies and initiatives will result in a substantial deepening of regional economic cooperation and progress toward our long-term vision of Good Neighbours, Good Partners and Good Prospects, Steffensen hoped.

CAREC is an ADB-supported initiative to encourage economic cooperation in Central Asia. Initiated in

1997, the programme to date has focused on regional initiatives in transport, trade facilitation, trade policy, and energy critical to improving the economic performance of the region and the livelihoods of all people - especially of the poor.

The Manila-based bank is dedicated to reducing poverty in the Asia and Pacific region through pro-poor sustainable economic growth, social development and good governance. In 2006, ADB approved loans and grants for projects totalling 8.5bn dollars and technical assistance amounting to almost 242m dollars.

Bbc Monitoring Asia Pacific

Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger ships used Indonesia as "home base" - sources

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by ISLAND Sri Lankan newspaper, The Island

Crews of LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] ships hunted down by the Sri Lanka Navy on the high seas in the recent past are believed to have used Indonesia as their "home base".

Some of the eight "floating arsenals" destroyed since September last year had been tracked down off the Indonesian waters, authoritative sources said.

The navy hit the first ship east of Kalmunai on 17 September and in the following month President Mahinda Rajapakse at a Temple Trees [president's official residence] meeting warned senior representatives of Co-chairs that Sri Lanka would target the enemy's floating arsenals.

Since then the navy had sunk seven ships in separate confrontations.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the sources said that the ships' crews seemed to have no problem in visiting Indonesia and some other neighbouring countries.

The LTTE had established direct links with influential Indonesians including some senior ex-servicemen, the sources said.

The Sunday Island learns that several LTTE cadres in Maldivian custody had revealed this during interrogation by a navy team from Colombo. By giving us swift access to suspects, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's administration facilitated the subsequent successful action against the LTTE, the sources said.

The LTTE is believed to have lost about 100 personnel along with eight ships estimated to be worth at least 50m dollars during the recent encounters. The sources said that several Sri Lankan Tamils with foreign passports would have been among the dead.

Sri Lanka is believed to have quietly briefed Indonesia about the likelihood of the LTTE using its territory as a platform to carry out a major arms transferring operation.

The revelation came in the backdrop of the arrest of two Indonesians [names omitted] for their alleged involvement with the LTTE. Their arrest along with several others led the US authorities to uncover a plot to finalize a major arms deal worth about 3m dollars, in Jakarta.

The LTTE had planned to spend a total of 18m dollars to acquire state-of-the-art war material. A part of the funds for the first deal was to be

transferred from a bank in Malaysia, according to US investigators.

Recently, Indonesia surprised the international community by acknowledging that international terrorists allegedly involved in attacks in the Philippines, Afghanistan, and even the bloody carnage at Bali had been entertained by senior Indonesian military officials as part of a strategy to cultivate former militants for intelligence purposes.

The Bali blasts saw over 200 people, mostly Australian, killed in October 2002.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

READERS WRITE

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A12

Section: Editorial

Byline: LEA A. MCLEES, JIM SUTHERLAND, HARRY WATERBOR, MIM EISENBERG, DENNIS TOLSMAN

Source: For the Journal-Constitution

Internet helps cancer patients

I disagree with doctors who warn pancreatic cancer patients to avoid the Internet because they might see grim statistics on their disease ("Survivor a beacon in cancer research," Page One, Oct. 22). There's a jewel of hope to be found online: The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (www.pancan.org).

Pancreatic cancer patients, their families and physicians can benefit from this Web site full of helpful information on treating and managing the disease. PanCAN representatives also maintain a clinical trials database. Local patients, families and health care professionals can also connect with Atlanta TeamHOPE through PanCAN's Web site. Yes, the Internet is home to some grim statistics, but it's also home to a beacon of hope.

LEA A. MCLEES

McLees, an Atlanta TeamHOPE volunteer, lost her husband to pancreatic cancer in 2003.

A reminder: It's better to fight 'over there'

When a nation is attacked by terrorists who are given safe haven by a second nation, what are they supposed to do? Should they negotiate to get that other nation to put a stop to the activity? Or should they go into that country and try to eradicate the terrorists? It depends on whom you ask.

If you ask leaders of the United States, which invaded Afghanistan, and the leaders of Israel, which invaded Lebanon, they probably would recommend incursion.

But it gets a little sticky when the country being attacked is Turkey, and the country providing refuge to terrorists is Iraq, which the U.S. is now occupying. Everyone who supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq and Israel's invasion of Lebanon must get behind the Turkish parliament's call for military action in northern Iraq. Remember, "it's better to fight them over there than here." The chickens have come home to roost.

JIM SUTHERLAND

Sutherland, of Atlanta, was formerly CNN manager of northern Iraq coverage. The drought: Responses to "Atlanta won't go thirsty," @issue, Oct. 22 Where's a sense of priority?

The typical government employee approach was strongly indicated in the column by Col. Byron Jorns of the Army Corps of Engineers. It seems he will be

happy if every user runs out of water at the same time -- people, industry and the Florida mussels. Nowhere in his writing is the idea of priority. At what low water level in the reservoirs will the Corps decide to cut off water flow to mussels in favor of drinking water in Atlanta? I imagine he would respond to this question by telling us all that priorities are not built into the laws he is following -- therefore he stops his rational thought process re[garding] priorities like any good government employee.

HARRY WATERBOR, Canton

Col. Jorns didn't mention conservation

Instead of being reassured by Col. Byron Jorns' op-ed piece, I am alarmed.

First, he mentioned not a word about conservation, which is the single-most important thing we all can do to preserve our dwindling water supplies in a city and state that seems to have missed the, er, boat in long-term planning and whose officials seem still to be trying to pretend our crisis will go away.

Second, he said, "... we will be well into springtime and it is likely that rainfall will return to the basin." Oh, yeah? In this time of climate change, there is no more "normal." We are in a crisis that cannot be wished away. Drastic measures are required by all to make sure we all have water.

MIM EISENBERG, Roswell

Lack of planning and awareness is no joke

In the 1970s, I was a volunteer with the Georgia Conservancy and participated in risk assessment. Naturally, we looked at population growth and water requirements. An environmentalist in-joke of that time went like this:

"An expert reports, 'There's good news and bad news. The good news is, in 30 years we'll all be drinking recycled sewage.'

'Wow, what's the bad news?'

'There won't be enough to go around.'

The explosive future growth of Atlanta and the constraints posed by water resources were well-understood not just by environmentalists, but by state and federal environmental agencies, the governor's office and legislative committees. Thus, it is disappointing now to acknowledge the inadequacy of our efforts in water conservation, water management and wastewater reclamation, not to

mention citizen awareness and social marketing.

DENNIS TOLSMA, Atlanta

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Bbc Monitoring South Asia

Pakistan paper reviews situation in border areas following abduction of troops

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by ISLPAK Pakistani newspaper The Pakistan Observer

The media, the people and the government seem to have forgotten the 300 soldiers and officers of Pakistan Army, who were captured by Taleban militants in Waziristan, and have been in the captivity of warlord Baitullah Masud since last seven weeks.

On 30 August 2007 the Taleban in Waziristan had announced the capture of 300 troops in a successful ambush by a large Taleban force near Luddah village, which is 25 miles north of Wana, the capital city of South Waziristan. Nine of hostages were officers, including one lieutenant colonel. The militants took away the seventeen trucks in which the convoy was travelling. Inter Services Public Relations director general, Major General Waheed Arshad, denied the troops capture, and said that "contact was lost with the troops, when they sought shelter in a valley during a storm. There is no suggestion of kidnapping or fighting." Later he told foreign media (CBS) that "the soldiers have been freed, and the situation has been almost resolved". Intelligence officers in South Waziristan said that the militants had taken the soldiers to different hideouts in the mountains. Government officials were sent to negotiate troop release. Contacts were established with the Masud Jerga [tribal meeting] to request Baitullah Masud to help secure their safe release. That the enemy was asked to help out is astonishingly naive. Baitullah Masud is estimated to command over 30000 well trained and motivated Jihadi fighters. The ambushed Pakistan Army unit was an experienced formation of Punjabi troops, loyal to General Pervez Musharraf. Their voluntary defection or refusal to fire on the Taleban was out of question.

There are different stories about their kidnapping. One is that ambush occurred following verbal arguments between local Taleban and army officers. The Taleban faked courtesy, and brought chairs and cots for the officers to sit, and have tea-Kava with them. Soon more Taleban fighters arrived wearing Chadors, and suddenly one of them pulled out his Kalashnikov, and put the muzzle on Colonels temple, and demanded surrender. The other story is that the militants had already stopped the army convoy at four places, warning the troop commander not to establish armed pickets en-route. But Lt Colonel Zafar rejected such demands.

The Taleban seemed to have prior information of troop movement and had deployed enough fighters and heavy weapons to surround the troops and cause heavy casualties. The strength of the Taleban force, which besieged own troops was about one thousand fighters. The lieutenant colonel got intimidated by the

Taleban strength and the display of heavy weapons. He knew that with the enemy occupying high positions, own troops were like sitting ducks. On 10 September 2007, there were conflicting reports about the fate of 280 Army hostages. A militant spokesman had informed Associated Press that the troops were handed over to members of a tribal council in village Laddah in South Waziristan. But the same day Major General Waheed Arshad had told radio Free Afghanistan that the tribal council was still negotiating their release. The Afghan radio station soon after announced that handing over of the troops, expected on 10 September, was stalled when fighting broke out between Army troops and Taleban militants near Laddah village.

Earlier on 28 August, Taleban militants had released 18 soldiers. But in the Laddah fighting 22 militants were killed in gunship helicopter attacks. Earlier on 9 August, sixteen soldiers were kidnapped. One soldier was beheaded in a gruesome manner by a 12 year old militant, and his body was dumped in a football field. This horrible act was video taped and distributed to the media, as a warning to Pakistani soldiers. That the Taleban rebels in Waziristan, have the same mentality as Daniel Pearls killers, should highlight the futility of negotiations with insane terrorists. Zulfiqar Masud spokesman of Baitullah Masud told BBC on 11 October 2007 that, "Pakistan is showing little urgency for talks over 280 Pakistan Army's captured soldiers".

The BBC was given exclusive access to the militants and the captured soldiers. We are very serious about the matter and want to resolve it peacefully". He was talking from a rebel base close to Afghanistan border, where captive Pakistani soldiers have been kept. "As far as response of the government of Pakistan is concerned, it is better to ask them about it, but I believe they have several reasons for not being serious about the release of their soldiers. One reason was the political crisis in Islamabad on the re-election of the President. Islamabad would have tried harder if the prisoners were sons or relatives of generals", Zulfiqar Masud cynically said."

The statements of Major General Waheed Arshad, soon after the capture of 280 Pakistan Army's officers, JCO's [junior commissioned officer] and other ranks were perplexing. His first statement was that they were guests of the Taleban, and would return soon. Soon after he said that negotiations were being held for their release. Till date he has not admitted that such a large body of troops were ambushed and captured by the Taleban. His contradictory statements gave rise to the above rumours, and did not placate worry and fear of the near and dear of the soldiers and officers taken hostage by rebels. It would have been better to

factually inform the public, how such a large body of troops fell into the rebels trap.

These captive soldiers are in the hearts and mind of the Pakistani nation, which is not satisfied with the official action to retrieve them from captivity. The Taliban brought three captured soldiers to a walled compound to give to the BBC account of how they got captured. The soldiers did not want to talk, but were forced to talk at gunpoint. Lt Colonel Zafar the officer commanding told BBC that pro-Taliban tribesmen had stopped and surrounded the Army convoy, which was taking supplies to remote Army posts. He informed his superior officers, who advised him to wait, while they negotiated with the militant leadership. After four hours it was realized that they were completely surrounded, and it was futile to resist".

This statement is difficult to refute. That Lt Colonel Zafar and his troops walked into a well planned ambush is astonishing. Realizing that it was too late to resist and any such attempt would cause very heavy casualties, he decided to surrender to the militants. It is unfortunate that without deploying reconnaissance parties of Khasadars or troops on hill tops, or asking for helicopters recce he took the road convoy in territory infested with rebels. Is it not a fact that several ambushes had already taken place on this track, and losses in men and material had occurred. Absence of an alternate contingency plan and lack of initiative to avoid the ambush, provides evidence of poor leadership in this crisis. The captured soldiers said that they had been treated well. They were not aware that three of their comrades had been killed by the Taliban.

The Taliban wanted release of thirty jailed comrades. They want the army to pull out of their area, to enable them to freely cross into Afghanistan, to join the Taliban jihad against foreign occupation. President Pervez Musharraf is furious about the lack of caution of the commanding officer. An enquiry has been ordered, and could follow by court martial. In the absence of official clarifications, rumours are rife and are being believed. It is rumoured that troops refused to fire on fellow Pushtuns. This is untrue. The capture of such a large number of army soldiers and officers by militant Taliban is not good for the morale of troops deployed in Waziristan. The Taliban and Al-Qa'idah have fought Pakistan Army to a stand still, and have taken over part of the country along the Pakistan-Afghan border, which has greatly boosted the morale of militant Taliban.

The fact is that the Taliban and Al-Qa'idah made startling gains in Pakistan during 2006, though it was denied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They took over control of North Waziristan, after signing the Waziristan Accord. And unofficially they also took over control of South Waziristan.

Government writ in both these agencies is almost non-existent after the army abandoned control of South Waziristan Agency. Both sides alleged that the other side had violated the accord. The Taliban have consolidated their position militarily and organizationally. They have established offices,

recruiting centres, and parallel governing administration.

The Taliban administration has allowed Al-Qa'idah and other Islamic militant fighters to live in the region to pursue their militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the western media 22 known Al-Qa'idah training camps exist in the tribal areas. This may be investigated by own intelligence agencies. Foreign governments and newsmen while making such allegations fail to point out the exact locations of the Al-Qa'idah- Taliban training camps in Waziristan or other FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas] Agencies. Such allegations therefore are not true. Their motive is to tarnish Pakistan and Islam. After the Waziristan Accord Pakistani authorities released over 2500 Taliban-Al-Qa'idah and other Jihadi prisoners. Most of these joined Taliban-Al-Qa'idah militias in Waziristan. About one thousand Taliban militants freed from Lal-Masjid [Red Mosque] have also joined the ranks of Taliban fighters who have mushroomed all over FATA, and in settled districts of NWFP [North West Frontier Province].

Presently they are burning down video and music shops, breaking TV and radio sets, bombing girl schools, vandalizing barber shops all over FATA and NWFP, including major cities like Peshawar, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan, Karak, Mardan, Bannu, Bajaur and Saidu Sharif. The police and the people remain silent spectators while the Taliban vandals and thugs engage in wanton arson and destruction. They are forcing people to keep beards and keep women indoors against their will. These unruly bigots flaunt their AK-47 Kalashnikovs to intimidate the people and the police. Presently the Taliban militants and Al-Qa'idah activists are busy recruiting, training and launching suicide bombers, and ambushes from their hide outs in Waziristan, Bajaur and other tribal areas.

The policy to crush militant Talibanism by military force needs a review. Four days of aerial bombing of Laddah, Mir Ali and other terrorists camps in Waziristan, which caused hundreds of deaths and injuries to several hundreds, has produced a backlash of suicide bombings, including the attack on Benazir's rally in Karachi. Is it possible in such a situation to bring the wayward militants and hardened killers and terrorists on board by a sagacious policy, which enables them to elect their own representatives i.e. people's representatives in all the FATA agencies? The earlier accord has failed.

The policy to deal with the insurrection in Waziristan be discussed in the parliament, and by grand jirgas, which include all Taliban leaders and commanders. A policy of reconciliation in the present situation is better than a policy of vengeance to settle scores.

Bbc Monitoring South Asia

Afghan minister, NATO experts discuss media cooperation

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by RAFG Afghan state radio

The information and culture minister had a meeting with cultural and information experts of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] today.

The Bakhtar Information Agency reports that the cultural and information delegation of the NATO, which arrived in Afghanistan from Europe, had a meeting with Minister of Information, Culture and Youth Affairs Mohammad Karim Khorram today to boost media cooperation.

In a part of his speech about cooperation between the Afghan and international media outlets, the information and culture minister said that joint efforts should be made to further strengthen peace and stability in the country and operations should be coordinated.

Peace and stability can be improved in the country at a time when there is close relations between people, officials and the international community, the minister said. Their cooperation should increase on a daily basis and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Youth Affairs is able to do this in a better way. In addition, we can take tangible steps in the field through cultural activities.

Bbc Monitoring South Asia

Pakistan, Afghanistan small jerga commission to meet in early November

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Published by APP Associated Press of Pakistan
(APP) news agency

Islamabad, 23 October: The first meeting of Pakistan and Afghanistan "Jirgagai" (small jerga) [tribal meeting] would be held here in the first week of November.

This was decided in a meeting between Pakistan and Afghanistan jerga commissions here on Tuesday [23 October].

Both the sides would finalize the names of the participants within next few days and then the exact date of convening the Jirgagai would be finalised, Interior Ministry said.

The two sides decided that they would expedite the ongoing process of dialogue for peace and reconciliation with opposition. Holding of regular meetings in order to monitor and oversee the implementation of the decisions/ recommendations of the Joint Peace Jerga.

Plan and facilitate convening of the next Joint Peace Jergas: The Afghan government representative, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Deputy Chairman of the Jerga Monitoring Commission Farooq Wardak along with a delegation visit Islamabad on an invitation of Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao.

It is pertinent to mention here that the next meeting of Pakistan-Afghan Peace Jerga Commission would be held in Islamabad after general election in Pakistan.

Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has conveyed this to Afghan President Hamid Karzai during a meeting with him in Herat.

The first meeting of the Peace Jerga was held in Kabul in August this year in which both the sides recognized the fact that terrorism is a common threat to both countries and the war on terror should continue to be an integral part of the national policies and security strategies of both countries.

The participants of this jerga unanimously declared to an extended, tireless and persistent campaign against terrorism and further pledge that government and people of Afghanistan and Pakistan will not allow sanctuaries/training centres for terrorists in their respective countries.

The Joint Peace Jerga resolved to constitute a smaller Jirga consisting of 25 prominent members from each side that is mandated to strive to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

Passchendaele: The price of principle paid in Canadian blood

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A15

Section: Editorial

Byline: Stephen Hume

Column: Stephen Hume

Source: Special to the Sun

To the Germans it was Dritte Flanderschlacht. To the British, the Third Battle of Ypres. To Canadians, Passchendaele.

Friday is the 90th anniversary of the bloodiest military experience in Canadian history. So, as parliamentarians indulge in tit-for-tat political theatre over the nature and duration of Canada's military role in Afghanistan, perhaps some reflection on the price of principle is timely.

The Passchendaele offensive began July 31, 1917. The British would punch through German lines, wheel coastward, seize the Belgian channel ports from which U-boats sortied and then liberate Belgium.

This grand plan degenerated into grisly stalemate. The British advanced three kilometres and lost 10 men for every step. After four weeks, 68,000 were dead, missing or wounded, more than 3,400 of them field officers.

Almost five million artillery rounds denuded the earth. Shell craters filled with tangles of rotting corpses, the "naked sodden buttocks, mats of hair, bulged, clotted heads" of Siegfried Sassoon's image lay partly submerged in scummy green water from which skin-searing mustard gas or lung-eating chlorine bubbled and burped.

This unimaginable place, eerily lit all night by flares, was churned by constant barrages and counter-barrages. The high explosives uncovered, buried and uncovered again decomposing body parts, while shrapnel from "whizzbangs" shredded the living with a randomness that mocked and demoralized the survivors.

Wilfrid Owen wrote about sheltering in an abandoned German dugout while shells rained down and "rain, guttering down in waterfalls of slime, kept slush waist-high and rising hour by hour" until suddenly "Thud! Flump! Thud! Down the steep steps came thumping and splashing in the flood, deluging muck, the sentry's body; then his rifle, handles of old Boche bombs, and mud in ruck on ruck."

"I died in hell (they called it Passchendaele)" wrote Sassoon, nicknamed "Mad Jack" for his bravery on night patrol. Sassoon described one comrade among the 80,000 driven mad who "moaned, shouted, sobbed, and choked while he was kneeling half-naked on the floor. In my belief such men have lost all patriotic feeling."

Sassoon's own diary from 1917 recorded an episode

in which "the floor is littered with parcels of dead flesh and bones, faces glaring at the ceiling, faces turned to the floor, hands clutching neck or belly; a livid grinning face with bristly moustache peers at me over the edge of my bed, the hands clutching my sheets."

The war hero threw away his Military Cross in disgust at patriotic jingoism and denounced "the insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed." The Canadians were to fix all that. They were elite shock troops selected to spearhead a third phase in the battle that had exhausted the British and Australians.

General Arthur Currie didn't like the prospect. He didn't like the ground. He didn't like the preparations. He had little confidence in senior British commanders. Currie warned that Passchendaele would cost 16,000 Canadian casualties. But, on Oct. 26, the Canadians were ordered to advance into a sea of oozing yellow mud so deep that it swallowed whole men, pack mules and vehicles.

On the first day, seven of 10 men in the South Saskatchewan Regiment were killed or wounded. Thereafter it was known as "the Suicide Battalion." Next the Loyal Edmonton Regiment took 75 per cent casualties. Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, "mowed down like wheat," lost 80 per cent of its officers and 60 per cent of its privates. The Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Nova Scotia Highlanders lost half their men in an afternoon. The Victoria Rifles were in the front line three days and lost 234.

In the first days at Passchendaele, Canadians fell at the rate of 1,000 per day. By the time they had reached their objective, 15,654 were casualties. Canadian newspapers stopped carrying long lists of the dead and wounded.

The casualty count for both sides in the battle remains controversial. It seems likely to have exceeded 460,000. On the British side alone, 90,000 bodies were unidentifiable and 42,000 were never found.

As for reflection upon Passchendaele and its price -- the awful, bloodsoaked ground the Canadians won at such cost was abandoned as militarily unimportant a few months later.

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Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Youth citizenship bill faces key vote

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 3

Section: A

Byline: By DAVE MONTGOMERY

The Senate faces another contentious showdown on immigration today when it considers legislation designed to put thousands of illegal-immigrant students on track to U.S. citizenship.

Although the proposed DREAM Act is far more limited than the comprehensive immigration bill that collapsed in the Senate in late June, today's debate will nevertheless resurrect the same arguments from the earlier battle.

The Senate bill faces a late-morning test, with supporters needing at least 60 votes to move forward with debate. Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., the chief sponsor, said Tuesday that his side has solid assurances of only about 55 votes but that he hopes to secure commitments from wavering senators.

The bill, known officially as the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, would give illegal immigrants who have grown up in the United States the opportunity to apply for citizenship if they graduate from high school and complete two years of college or serve in the military.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn, the senior Republican on the immigration subcommittee, said he plans to vote against bringing up the measure. He said the bill would grant illegal immigrants broad access to student loans "at a time when we are struggling to meet loan needs for our own citizens." Cornyn said the legislation also lacks safeguards against fraudulent applications.

Under the proposal, candidates for citizenship must be no older than 30 and must have lived in the United States at least five years as of the bill's passage date. A report released by supporters Tuesday projected that the bill would immediately affect 360,000 high school graduates and eventually 715,000 more youngsters ages 5 to 17.

The DREAM Act was included in the failed immigration bill that the White House supported and has generally attracted bipartisan support. But conservatives and groups advocating restrictive immigration policies have tried to derail the measure, saying supporters are trying to open the door to granting amnesty to millions of other illegal immigrants.

"I think we're going to have to start calling this the 'recurring dream act' because the supporters of amnesty are just relentless. They will not accept no for an answer," said Ira Mehlman, a spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform.

But Durbin and other supporters said the legislation

offers hope to children who entered the United States with their parents and attended public schools but are denied further advancement because of their illegal status.

Many of the students have "heartbreaking stories" and are simply "asking us for a chance to stay" in the United States as legal residents, Durbin said.

"This is a bill that is going to be very difficult for members to vote against," said Angela Kelley, director of the Immigration Policy Center, a pro-immigration organization. "This is just a straight policy question about how we treat our kids."

The White House hasn't assumed an active role in the debate, although Durbin said high-ranking administration officials have assured him privately that they support the bill.

Durbin said the military has also embraced the bill as an "excellent opportunity" to broaden the pool of potential recruits and overcome the challenges of maintaining needed troop levels for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Online: Federation for American Immigration Reform, www.fairus.org

Immigration Policy Center, www.aifl.org/ipc/ipc_index.asp

Columbus Ledger-Enquirer

Government may waste \$100 million a year on unused anthrax vaccine

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: Need_To_Map

BY EILEEN SULLIVAN

Associated Press

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The government stands to waste \$100 million a year if two federal agencies cannot agree to coordinate the use of a vaccine for the deadly anthrax bacterial disease.

The departments of Defense and Health and Human Services each purchase the anthrax vaccine, BioThrax. But much of the vaccine purchased for HHS goes unused, according to government investigators.

Currently the Strategic National Stockpile has more than 520,000 doses of the vaccine -- worth \$12 million -- that have already expired, according to a Government Accountability Office report obtained by The Associated Press before its release at a hearing Tuesday before the Senate homeland security committee.

GAO said the two departments should create a single inventory system for these drugs so they are not wasted. The Defense Department gives BioThrax to personnel who will deploy to Iraq, Afghanistan and the Korean peninsula, according to the report.

The national stockpile is kept in secret storage facilities around the country. As of June, the stockpile had about 10 million doses of the vaccine -- all of which will expire if not used.

"It just seems like a common-sense solution to a problem that otherwise is going to cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars," Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said Tuesday. Collins is the top Republican on the committee.

The departments say legal issues stand in the way of a vaccine-sharing agreement, and say the GAO overestimated the amount of money lost as a result.

Responding to the report, an HHS official said such an agreement could save \$25 million a year rather than \$100 million. Another obstacle to such an agreement is that the Pentagon does not use nearly as many vaccines as HHS buys for its stockpile, said David G. Jarrett, the defense department's medical director at the office of the special assistant for chemical and biological defense and chemical demilitarization programs.

"It should also be noted that DoD cannot distribute expiring stocks at the last minute," Jarrett wrote in his response to the report.

In September and October 2001, anthrax exposures in the U.S. killed five people and injured 22. The federal government accelerated its program to develop more successful vaccines, but that program continues to run into problems. Investigators have not determined who is responsible for the attacks.

"This keeps me and a lot of other people up at night," Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, I-Conn., said Tuesday. Lieberman chairs the Senate committee and said this would be the first of many reports on anthrax and bioterrorism. "The ease of bringing biological agents into the country or actually procuring them here and then the propensity they have to multiply and spread has devastating consequences."

The vaccine's shelf life is currently three years, according to manufacturer Emergent BioSolutions Inc. In September the company signed a three-year contract with HHS to provide 18.75 million doses of the anthrax vaccine for the national stockpile.

HHS plans to use the expired anthrax vaccines even though that goes against Food and Drug Administration guidelines, according to the report. But in its response to the report, HHS said it would destroy the expired drugs.

The Globe And Mail

Ottawa defends use of clandestine security firm

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A17

Section: National News

Byline: Gloria Galloway

Dateline: OTTAWA

Source: With a report from Paul Koring in Washington

OTTAWA -- Hiring private companies to protect overseas missions is nothing unusual, Canada's Defence Minister said yesterday after opposition members raised concerns about a British company that is providing security for Canadian diplomats in Kabul.

"Private security firms have been used from time to time depending on the issue, depending on the type of training that is required. That is standard practice," Defence Minister Peter MacKay said.

"It has happened under the previous government and we are very judicious when we enter into these contracts."

The Globe and Mail reported this week that Saladin Security, a British firm with a long history of clandestine operations, has been hired to protect Canadian diplomats in Afghanistan - including Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Saladin's gun-toting employees provide perimeter security, operate checkpoints, serve as bodyguards and form a heavily armed rapid-reaction force in Kabul.

Opposition members point to the controversial track record of similar firms that have been hired by the United States in places such as Iraq.

Denis Coderre, the Liberal defence critic, told the House of Commons yesterday that private U.S. security firms operating in combat zones "have raised some very serious questions about whether or not NATO countries can be held accountable by local authorities if laws are broken."

Mr. Coderre went on to say that Canadians have no way of confirming the chain of accountability for Saladin because the contract is being kept secret. The Globe has been trying unsuccessfully for weeks to get government officials to release even the name of the firm. They declined. Nor would they provide any details of the contract.

"When will the government stop its pattern of secrecy and table the contract?" Mr. Coderre asked.

Mr. MacKay replied that it is clear that the contract was not being kept secret because it had been the subject of news stories in The Globe.

Mr. Coderre also asked why the Canadian forces in Afghanistan are not sufficient to protect the embassy and its staff.

Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier, who fielded that question, did not provide a direct answer. Instead, he

assured the Commons that government rules had been applied when Saladin was hired.

"We have a contract system that we use. All of the procedures are followed," Mr. Bernier said. "These are the procedures that we follow in all of the embassies throughout the world."

Dawn Black, the defence critic for the New Democrats, said that she has come up empty when she has asked for information about private security firms that have been hired to provide protection overseas.

"This is one thing I have noticed with this government," Ms. Black said. "They are taking longer and longer to respond to requests for access to information. They are blacking out more and more and more. They are becoming much more secretive and controlling."

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The Hamilton Spectator

Celebrity Briefs; Oh yeah, blame the help

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: G3

Section: Go

Source: The Hamilton Spectator

Illustrations: Photo: Tom Cruise and Robert Redford

Photo: Kylie Minogue

Photo: Sarah Jessica Parker

Photo: America Ferrera

Photo: Amy Ryan

Photo: Leonardo DiCaprio

Photo: Angelina Jolie

Photo: Jennifer Aniston

Photo: Amy Winehouse

Photo: Bob Dylan

Photo: Halle Berry

Photo: Kelsey Grammer

Photo: Mel B

Halle Berry has apologized after making an anti-Semitic joke on The Tonight Show.

She was showing Jay Leno distorted images of herself when she held up a photograph of her with a larger nose and quipped she looked like her Jewish cousin.

Berry said later, "I realized it could be seen as offensive, so I asked Jay to take it out. I have three girls who are Jewish who work for me. We were going through pictures to see which ones looked silly, and one of my Jewish friends said of the big-nose picture, 'That could be your Jewish cousin!' I guess it was fresh in my mind, and it just came out of my mouth."

Hotshots in hot spot

Mel Gibson, Kelsey Grammer and Victoria Principal are some of the celebrities who've been forced to leave their homes as wildfires burned through Malibu.

Grammer's home is no longer in danger. And, Gibson and Principal's houses are still standing after evacuations on Sunday.

Variety says Jeffrey Katzenberg was covering his home with fire-retardant foam to protect it.

And it reports David Geffen is letting firefighters and rescue workers stay for free at a small luxury hotel it says he owns at the Southern California beach.

Variety also says that TV show 24 had to stop production yesterday when it was shooting at a former naval station several kilometres south in Orange County. It was downwind of fires in that area.

Once burned, twice smarter

Mel B has reportedly ordered her husband to give up his rights to their \$5 million home.

The Spice Girl, who bought the Hollywood Hills mansion after signing a \$20-million deal to reunite with her former bandmates, forced husband Stephen Belafonte to declare she is the sole owner of the property. A source told Britain's The Sun: "Mel learned a lot from her divorce from Jimmy Gulzar. The marriage lasted less than a year and he got \$1.4 million. She is smart enough to know she has to protect herself and her children."

SARAH JESSICA PARKER TO REMARRY

Sarah Jessica Parker's Sex and the City wedding is going to have to be reshot. The actress filmed the original wedding scenes at New York's Saint Patrick's Cathedral but has been told she must marry her fictional on-off lover Mr. Big for a second time. A source said: "The wedding sequence with Carrie and Big is turning into a mess. They rushed through the shoot, and now it looks like most of it will have to be reshot at the New York Public Library in Bryant Park. It's a difficult scene to shoot, and the team isn't thrilled with the material they have."

Life is to shhhhhh-ort

Amy Winehouse has vowed to carry on drinking. The singer insists life is "too short" for her to amend her hellraising ways.

"Just do it. I've made a lot of mistakes. I always say I don't regret things and I don't say sorry, but I do really. I believe strongly in fate. I believe that everything happens for a reason."

The 24-year-old -- who was arrested last week for

possession of cannabis in Norway -- says she drinks to overcome her insecurities.

MILLS LOOKING TO AIR HER DIVORCE LAUNDRY

Heather Mills wants Reese Witherspoon to play her in a movie about her life and an unknown to play Paul McCartney.

The 39-year-old former model, who is currently embroiled in a divorce battle with McCartney, has flown to the U.S. to discuss the film and is convinced the Oscar-winning actress would be perfect.

A source said: "Heather sees this film as the tragic and empowering story of her life. But the most interesting part of the tale will be the dark goings on behind closed doors." Mills is also reportedly arranging an interview with Larry King and is said to be keen to appear on Oprah.

Who are those guys?

Tom Cruise and Robert Redford pose for the cameras yesterday at the Rome Film Festival. They are in the Eternal City for their new film, Lions for Lambs, in which they both star and Redford directs. The movie, which opens Nov. 7, tells the story of how injuries sustained by two army rangers behind enemy lines in Afghanistan set off a sequence of events involving a congressman (Cruise), a journalist (Meryl Streep) and a professor (Redford).

Leo's on the loose

Leonardo DiCaprio has reportedly split from girlfriend Bar Rafaeli.

Sources claim the romance had run its course and it was an "amicable split" after almost two years. Bar was recently spotted leaving an Israeli hotel with professional surfer Kelly Slater, who also dated Leonardo's previous girlfriend Gisele Bundchen.

You call those curves?

America Ferrera can't believe super-slim actresses like Eva Longoria and Jessica Alba are labelled "curvy."

The Ugly Betty star insists she is more deserving of praise for her genuinely shapely figure than the two slender screen beauties.

"I think it's hilarious when people call Jessica Alba or Eva Longoria curvy. Come on -- they're not curvy. I'm curvy!"

The 23-year-old admits she does occasionally obsess over her appearance but loves food too much to go on a diet to lose weight.

She told Britain's Star magazine: "There are times when I go to the gym and really try, and there are times when I just don't. Even if I wanted to be anorexic, I just don't have what it takes. After four hours of being anorexic, I'd be like, 'It has been four

whole hours. Feed me!'"

DOCTOR'S ORDER: TAKE IT EASY Kylie Minogue is being warned by doctors about her plans for a world tour to celebrate her 40th birthday. The singer -- who was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2005 -- has been warned a gruelling schedule could have detrimental effects on her health. A source said: "If it was up to her, she'd do an endless string of dates but doctors say she needs to make herself a priority and take more time to relax." Minogue was given the all-clear from breast cancer in early 2006 after having a partial mastectomy.

But he sang from a Buick 6

Bob Dylan is now shilling for Cadillac.

Dylan stars in a new commercial for the Cadillac Escalade, which has XM Radio as a standard feature, and Dylan happens to do a show on XM.

The commercial shows Dylan driving an Escalade through America's heartland.

Dylan's Theme Time Radio Hour on XM this week has a Cadillac theme.

And you would be?

Have you heard of any of the names on Variety's 10 Actors to Watch list?

Variety predicts we'll be seeing a lot more from these 10 stars-to-be: Anna Kendrick from Rocket Science; Amy Ryan who's in Gone Baby Gone; Chris Messina from the small indie romance Ira and Abby; Ben Foster who's in both 3:10 To Yuma and 30 Days of Night; Paul Schneider in Lars and the Real Girl; Malin Akerman who drives Ben Stiller's character away in The Heartbreak Kid; Andrew Garfield in Lions For Lambs; Summer Bishil in Nothing Is Private; Sam Riley in Control and Tang Wei in Lust, Caution.

W MARKS THE SPAT

Angelina Jolie and Jennifer Aniston are set to battle it out on the cover of W magazine. Aniston -- whose marriage to Brad Pitt ended shortly after he starred in Mr. and Mrs. Smith with Jolie -- and the Tomb Raider actress star on separate covers of the November edition of the publication titled The Art Issue. A source said: "It's like a rematch between Angelina and Jennifer. Angelina might have won Brad but who will sell more magazine covers?!"

Compiled by Doug Foley from Spectator news services

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The Daily News (Nanaimo)

Caption Only

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A3

Section: News

Source: Reuters

Illustrations: Photo: Reuters / AFGHANISTAN: M. Cpl. Frank Flibotte, left, helps a wounded fellow Canadian soldier from the NATO-led coalition retreat under fire after his position was hit by Taliban shells during an ambush near Kandahar on Tuesday. One Canadian soldier was lightly wounded and an Afghan National Army soldier was shot in the shoulder during heavy fighting.

New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal

NDP position on Taliban 'naïve,' says floor-crosser; Politics Afghanistan, nuclear power led to Kelly Corner's switch to Liberals

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Page: A2
Section: News;News
Byline: Rob Linke TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Last spring, Kelly Corner took the step that separates those who stick their necks out from those who are content to be the armchair experts of politics.

The engaging 48-year-old pediatric physiotherapist with a keen interest in public issues agreed to be acclaimed as candidate for a federal party.

"It was a dream come true," she said, recalling how she immediately set about researching the issues in her Fredericton riding.

And that's when the deep misgivings began about the party she had thought was a natural fit for a health care worker with a passion for social justice.

Corner's misgivings grew into her abandoning the NDP.

Last Saturday, to loud cheers at the Fredericton nomination meeting that chose airport executive David Innes as the candidate in place of retiring MP Andy Scott, she was introduced to the faithful as a Liberal.

But what were Corner's misgivings about the New Democrats?

There were primarily two: Afghanistan and nuclear power.

On both, the party holds positions she came to think are too rigid or outdated.

Corner approached CFB Gagetown, which had a hundreds-strong contingent of soldier deployed in Kandahar last spring, and asked if she could meet with senior officers and rank-and-file soldiers and their families in order to better understand Canada's mission there.

She went into that research thinking "we shouldn't be there. I was very open about my prejudices and about being the NDP candidate.

"I never felt they put a sales job on me."

But after speaking with the military - and reading plenty of reports, including that of a parliamentary committee - she decided that despite problems with the mission, "the NDP position that we should pull out and negotiate with the Taliban struck me as naïve."

As to nuclear power, Corner said she's not entirely comfortable with the New Brunswick government openly approaching the construction of a second

reactor at Point Lepreau as a tool of economic development.

But the NDP position "is no nukes - period," she said. "I felt it exists, yes there are pro's and con's, but their position is too black and white."

She said that her research, which included talking to nuclear engineers, led her to conclude nuclear power has to be part of a diverse portfolio of energy sources, including wind and solar.

Even on health care, Corner began to feel the NDP's concerns about private health care limited a healthy debate.

Scott expressed her concerns to party organizers but learned that party positions were not about to change. She was offered a conversation with party leader Jack Layton, but turned it down because her mind was made up to leave the party by that time, she said.

Scott said Corner had approached him last spring to ask about the issues in the riding. He offered to help because he wanted an ally in arguing the Conservatives had shortchanged New Brunswick in the federal budget.

But once Corner started to express frustration with the New Democrats, "I told her it's not really a conversation to have with me," said Scott, explaining he feared people would suspect he'd manipulated her.

Corner said Scott never came close to twisting her arm to join the Liberals.

"Not at all," she said. "He was quite quiet when I started sharing my concerns about the NDP. I was the one who brought it up."

Corner has offered to volunteer for Innes during the next federal campaign. She also plans to attend the New Brunswick Liberal Association's biennial convention in Edmundston this weekend.

Corner is the second federal NDP candidate to leave the party to join the Liberals. Terry Albright, the former president of the New Brunswick NDP and the federal NDP candidate in Saint John in 2004 and 2006, left to join the Liberals in 2006.

A previous NDP candidate in Fredericton later became the Green Party candidate.

Corner had been an active NDP candidate during what she calls her "evolution" of becoming a Liberal, wearing Layton buttons at the popular Saturday

farmers' market and hosting visiting MPs such as NDP international trade critic Peter Julian at public forums.

She said she agonized over the decision to withdraw as the NDP candidate, fearing they'd see her move as a betrayal.

"I don't want to hurt the NDP," she said. "But I thought this was the right thing to do."

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The Charlotte Observer

30-DAY STANDARD FOR TREATMENT: Push to reveal time vets wait for care

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 2B

Section: Local

Byline: STELLA M. HOPKINS, shopkins@charlotteobserver.com

Veterans advocates and two key congressional leaders said Tuesday the VA should make public reports that show whether it is providing timely health care appointments for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

The remarks follow an Observer analysis that found recent veterans seeking care for serious injuries and illnesses often wait longer than the VA's 30-day standard.

"That's an alarm bell we can not ignore," said Sen. Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat who serves on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "There's no way we can do our job unless we know the facts."

Murray plans to question the VA's top health official, Michael Kussman, on the findings at a committee hearing today. She also plans to ask the undersecretary for health about making the appointment information public.

The Observer analysis of 283,000 recent outpatient appointments found the VA scheduled 93 percent within 30 days, a key measure of its ability to meet demand.

However, veterans suffering traumatic brain injury, grave wounds or serious illnesses accounted for a large share of those waiting longer. Those veterans represented 10.5 percent of appointments scheduled, but 20 percent of those with longer waits, according to data in VA records. That could signal the VA is struggling to care for the neediest of new veterans.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has disputed the findings, saying the reports are management tools to identify long waits but not an accurate measure of total service. The agency says it is meeting patient needs.

Critics say the analysis shows the system is overwhelmed.

"It's a sign that we're failing veterans," said Paul Rieckhoff, an Iraq veteran and founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "This is the statistical data to back up what we've been hearing."

Problems could worsen. Better military medical treatment means some soldiers are surviving wounds that would have killed them in the past. They come home needing a lifetime of costly care.

The VA does not typically disclose how long veterans wait for scheduled appointments. Those reports, as revealed by the Observer, are red flags of

potential delay problems.

"It's tragic and unacceptable," said U.S. Rep. Bob Filner, the California Democrat who heads the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The Globe And Mail

Nothing 'unusual' in security

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A20

Section: Letter To The Editor

Byline: Aaron Martyn

Dateline: Stayner, Ont.

Source: Master Corporal, Canadian Forces Military Police

Stayner, Ont. -- Saladin Security is used in Afghanistan, however, their personnel are supervised by highly trained members of the Canadian Forces Military Police, who are there in number.

Saladin does not provide close protection for the Canadian ambassador. It is provided by military police officers and they are accountable for any actions that occur while they are working. I know this because I spent the past year protecting the ambassador and Canadian personnel at the embassy in Kabul.

For the record, I just checked my bank account and I can assure your readership I am not a highly paid mercenary.

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The Globe And Mail

Nothing 'unusual' in security

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A20

Section: Letter To The Editor

Byline: Arif Lalani

Dateline: Kabul

Source: Ambassador, Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan

Kabul -- At many Canadian missions abroad, the Government of Canada engages local firms to provide on-site security (Hired Gunmen Protect VIPs - Oct 22). This is not unusual. The security firm at the Embassy in Kabul provides perimeter security and serves as a first point of contact to undertake security screening of visitors. They do not provide close personal protection service.

The firm employed by the embassy is certified and registered with local government authorities and operates in accordance with, and is subject to, Afghan law. The contract was reached through a competitive bid process, in accordance with standard contracting rules and regulations.

The article notes that contract details and the rules of engagement for such private security firms are not public. I suspect your readers understand that we do not disclose nor discuss matters relating to operational security of the embassy for the protection of our staff.

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The Globe And Mail

Failure would be a disaster, Dutch warn NATO

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A16

Section: International News

Byline: Alan Freeman

Dateline: NOORDWIK, THE NETHERLANDS

Illustrations: Illustration

NOORDWIK, THE NETHERLANDS -- As NATO defence ministers prepared for the start of a crucial meeting on the future of the precarious mission in Afghanistan, the Dutch Defence Minister warned that failure in the war-shattered country would be a "disaster."

"I think everyone realizes that NATO took on a responsibility [to Afghanistan]. We have to succeed," Eimert van Middelkoop told The Globe yesterday. "It would be a disaster for world peace and justice if a modern professional alliance such as NATO will fail in a country like Afghanistan."

Mr. van Middelkoop is hosting the two-day meeting of the 26-member alliance, which starts today, at a particularly sensitive moment. The Dutch cabinet is to decide any day now whether or not to renew the mandate of its 1,500 soldiers stationed in the volatile region of Uruzgan.

As in Canada, the Afghan mission is unpopular with the Dutch public, which is increasingly bitter about the failure of other NATO nations, such as Germany and Italy, to pitch in and help in the south, where violence is heavier and the risk to troops all that much higher. Instead, those nations have decided to stick to the safer northern regions.

Yet despite the mission's unpopularity, the Dutch government is reluctant to let NATO down in its most ambitious military venture ever and does not want to be the first to abandon the alliance. If the Dutch were to pull out in August of next year, it's widely believed that Canada would be next when the current parliamentary authorization runs out in February of 2009.

"We do realize that because we are the first making a decision that it has enormous international implications," said Mr. van Middelkoop, who added that he feels particular kinship with Canada because of its commitment to Afghanistan and its role in liberating the Netherlands from the Nazis. "Canada is watching us, and we are watching Canada."

It's widely believed that the Dutch cabinet will agree to a two-year extension of its commitment and will continue to lead the force in Uruzgan, though with a reduction of its force to about 1,200 members. Making up the numbers is still a challenge, although Australia has upped its troop numbers, Slovakia has agreed to send 35 more soldiers to the region and there is talk of adding 200 or so troops from Georgia.

Britain has also added recently to its force, which now numbers 7,700, as it reduces its troop strength in

southern Iraq. The United States is by far the largest foreign presence in Afghanistan with more than 15,000 soldiers.

"What's at stake is the foundation of NATO," said Frank van Kappen, a senior analyst at the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, who added that the Dutch are angry that they volunteered to do some of "the heavy lifting" in the south for two years but nobody has turned up to pick up the load.

"NATO doesn't have any troops of its own so a promise from NATO that they would find others is not exactly rock solid," he said.

Mr. van Kappen said that when it became time to pacify Kosovo at the start of the decade, NATO had no trouble gathering a force of 65,000 for a tiny piece of territory. Instead, the alliance has assembled a force of just 40,000 to pacify Afghanistan, a territory twice the size of Germany.

"ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] doesn't have enough troops and because it doesn't have enough troops, it can't keep the territory it takes," said Timo Noetzel, a visiting fellow at Chatham House, a foreign-policy think tank in London.

"A German newspaper has called it a discount war," he added.

Dr. Noetzel is particularly concerned about what will happen if Canada decides to bring its soldiers home. "If a government like Canada decides to pull its troops, the entire operation would run into great difficulty."

In Denmark, which is beefing up its commitment to 650 soldiers from 450, the public appears less concerned even though the troops are fighting alongside the British in Helmand, another hot spot.

"Our commitment is open-ended," said Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, head of the Danish Institute for Military Affairs, who expects the Danish parliament to continue renewing the mission annually.

The more positive attitude toward the Danish role is based on a key fact. The Afghan mission has replaced a more controversial one in Iraq.

"Because we've been in Iraq, Afghanistan looks more benign," Dr. Rasmussen said.

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The Globe And Mail

Beleaguered NATO set to charter helicopters

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A1

Section: International News

Byline: Paul Koring

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Illustrations: Illustration

WASHINGTON -- NATO plans to rent helicopters to resupply front lines and remote bases in southern Afghanistan - an unprecedented move that could reduce ground casualties even as it exposes the unwillingness of major European allies to send their choppers into dangerous, Taliban-infested areas.

Defence ministers meeting today in the Netherlands are expected to approve chartering up to 20 large helicopters, flown by civilian contractors, to provide vital airlift and reduce the number of military convoys exposed to roadside bombs. Most Canadian casualties this year have been caused by roadside bombs.

Senior officers from countries doing the bulk of the fighting are tightlipped about the scope of the commercial helicopter deal, although there is no secret about the deepening rift in the alliance between those countries willing to fight and those unwilling to help those fighting.

Outsourcing helicopter services will also relieve the severely overstrained U.S. helicopter squadrons in Kandahar whose deployment has been repeatedly extended.

NATO's Military Committee, chaired by Canadian General Raymond Henault, "recently passed to political authorities, advice for their consideration to outsource some of NATO's air transport requirements to meet airlift shortfalls in Afghanistan," said his spokesman, Colonel Brett Boudreau.

Canada, the only country with a major fighting role in southern Afghanistan that has no applicable helicopters of its own, may reap much of the benefit if NATO opts for commercial helicopters and pilots of fortune to fill the gaping holes in airlift capacity caused by Europeans unwilling to venture into conflict zones.

Italy, Spain and France are among the Western European countries with large numbers of big, modern helicopters protected by sophisticated anti-missile defences and flown by highly trained crews. All three countries have turned a deaf ear to repeated pleas to deploy their aircraft to southern Afghanistan.

In the past few weeks, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer made a final appeal for military-transport helicopters. He was turned down by Germany, France, Turkey, Spain and Greece, according to a NATO source.

Several of those countries, with troops deployed in

northern Afghanistan, far from the worst of the fighting, have urged the Harper government to extend Canada's commitment beyond the current cut-off date of February, 2009. "We have run out of options, if we can't get support from allies, I guess we will have to rent it," said one frustrated NATO officer who asked that neither his rank nor his nationality be disclosed.

U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates was almost as blunt in advance of today's gathering of NATO defence ministers.

"I am not satisfied that an alliance whose members have over two million soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen cannot find the modest additional resources that have been committed for Afghanistan," he said.

For more than a year, the helicopter shortfall has been among NATO's most pressing priorities and Canadian field commanders in Kandahar have repeatedly said how much they are needed.

Never before has the world's biggest military alliance rented aircraft and hired pilots to fill in combat zone roles.

Details have yet to be worked out but it's unlikely that NATO soldiers, including Canadians, will be flown in the ill-defended chartered helicopters. Rather they will airlift supplies, and ammunition. That will free up the stretched Dutch, British and U.S. helicopters based at Kandahar to transport soldiers and evacuate casualties as well as maintain supply lines.

By mid-winter, large, vulnerable, helicopters - likely aging Russian Mi-17s - will be clattering across Afghan skies delivering everything from bullets to beans to Canadian soldiers deployed in remote outposts across Kandahar province.

Finding helicopters and pilots capable and willing to work in southern Afghanistan, where extreme heat and rugged mountains make flying difficult even without the prospect of being shot at with shoulder-fired missiles or rocket-propelled grenades, will be very expensive.

According to industry sources, a U.S. helicopter charter firm with long experience in deploying large helicopters to remote parts of the globe has already been asked to begin identifying a fleet of available helicopters.

Many Western commercial operators are expected to shun flying in Afghanistan because the risks will be very high. At least 18 military helicopters - all of

them armed and equipped with defensive systems such as flares to decoy heat-seeking missiles - have been shot down or crashed, killing 110 soldiers and airmen since the U.S.-led coalition toppled the Taliban in 2001. The most recent was a large U.S. Chinook that was shot down in May just after it unloaded scores of troops in southern Afghanistan. Five U.S. airmen, a Canadian military photographer and a British soldier were killed.

The cost of chartering large helicopters is expected to be very high. At standard commercial rates, an Mi-17 - the civilian version of the widely used and rugged Russian workhorse capable of lifting four tonnes - could exceed \$100,000 a week, yet fly far less than the punishing days endured by U.S., British and Dutch crews. Given the high costs of maintenance and the premium civilian pilots can be expected to demand for risking their lives, the cost could easily soar. A flock of 20 Mi-17s or a smaller number of the even larger Mi-26s, might cost more than \$100-million a year, one industry source said.

"We need helicopters everywhere and one of the options being studied is leasing contracts," NATO spokesman James Appathurai said earlier this month.

Although the chartered helicopters would be leased by NATO'S International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and available for use throughout the country, a senior officer said he expected most of them to be based at Kandahar airport.

Risk reduction

It is hoped that the new NATO heavy-lift helicopters will keep Canadian troops off Afghan roads, and away from deadly improvised explosive devices.

Canadian deaths in Afghanistan by incident,
2002-present

IED: 31

Combat: 15

Suicide attack: 12

Friendly fire: 8

Other: 6

SOURCE: DND

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National Post

Democrats Fight Bush's Funding Request

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A16

Section: World

Column: World Report

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Source: Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON -Democrats said the U.S.'s poor and sick would foot the bill for the war in Iraq, digging in for a long battle of attrition over President George W. Bush's mammoth US\$196-billion funding request.

Mr. Bush had misplaced priorities by calling for the emergency cash injection, at a time when he is threatening to veto a sheaf of spending bills, they added. "The President has one hand out demanding almost US\$200-billion of our money for Iraq this year," said Senator Robert Menendez. "With the other he wants to veto a bill that provides for cancer research, hospitals, early childhood education and worker safety." The president threw down the gauntlet to the Democratic-led Congress by asking for more money to fund the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

National Post

Caption Only

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A1

Section: News

Source: Reuters

Illustrations: Color Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / AMBUSHED IN KANDAHAR PROVINCE: A wounded Canadian soldier crawls for cover after his position was ambushed by Taliban fighters yesterday in Afghanistan's Zhari district. A joint operation between NATO and Afghan National Army forces to raid an insurgents' mud fortress was repelled, but no serious injuries were reported. Story, Page A2.

'Crimes against humanity' in Iran; Canada denies refugee claimant due to war crimes

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A1

Section: News

Byline: Stewart Bell

Dateline: TORONTO

Source: National Post

TORONTO - Canada's refugee agency has ruled that Iran's Revolutionary Guard committed crimes against humanity, citing the militia's use of secret jails, torture and violence against dissidents.

The Immigration and Refugee Board wrote in the recent decision that the Revolutionary Guard, a key component of Tehran's state security apparatus, was responsible for human rights abuses and atrocities.

The board released the decision on its Web site on Oct. 11. It concerns Sayed Amin Hoseyni Bob Anari, a former member of the Guard -- also known by its Persian name Pasdaran -- who had sought refuge in Canada.

The refugee board ruling may not go over well in Tehran: President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and most of his Cabinet were Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps officers at one time, effectively making them suspected war criminals under Canadian law.

The ruling also comes as Iran is facing mounting pressure over the Guard's covert involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and growing concerns about its nuclear program. The United States is debating whether to place the Guard on its list of outlawed terrorist groups, and Canada has not ruled out doing the same.

The former militiaman admitted to Canadian officials the Guard had carried out human rights abuses such as beatings and arrests of reformist students who participated in protests in the summer of 1999.

The IRB turned down Mr. Anari's refugee claim on the grounds he had been a member of an organization that committed crimes against humanity. He has appealed the decision to the Federal Court of Canada.

In addition to attacks on student protesters, the Revolutionary Guard operates secret prisons where detainees are subjected to inhumane treatment and torture, the refugee agency said in its decision.

A self-described "people's army," the Guard Corps was formed in 1979 to protect the Islamic revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini. It has since become a parallel military, with 125,000 fighters. Commanders are appointed by the President. But the refugee board said "there were serious reasons for considering that the Pasdaran, and its individual members, had committed crimes against humanity."

The U.S. Senate passed a motion last month urging

the White House to declare the Guard a terrorist group. The Guard is accused of supporting Shiite militias in Iraq as well as Hezbollah in Lebanon and anti-government forces in Afghanistan, where dozens of Canadian soldiers have been killed in roadside bombings.

Components for some of the bombs used for attacks on coalition forces have allegedly come from Iran.

In rejecting Mr. Anari's refugee claim, the IRB wrote that, "The claimant was an active part-time member of the Pasdaran ... and a member of the Basij (a militia controlled by the Pasdaran) while attending university. His membership in those organizations was voluntary.

"He played an active role in the July, 1999, reprisals against student demonstrations, which resulted in indiscriminate assaults on students and hundreds of arrests. "

Montreal Gazette

Iraqi PM orders rebels' offices closed; Crackdown on PKK. Turkey won't rule out action into Kurdish area

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: A15

Section: News

Byline: AMMAR KARIM

Dateline: BAGHDAD

Source: AFP

Iraq's prime minister ordered a crackdown yesterday on Kurdish PKK rebels, saying Iraq will no longer tolerate the "terrorist" group on its soil, amid Turkish threats of a military incursion.

"The PKK is a bad terrorist organization and we have taken a decision to close its offices and not allow them to work on Iraqi soil," Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said after he met visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan.

Al-Maliki has been under pressure from Ankara and Washington to act against the Iraq-based rebels attacking Turkey.

Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, who is a Kurd, said Iraq had begun undertaking a series of measures to thwart the rebels, "including restricting their movements, (their) funding and closing of their offices."

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) operates clandestinely through local social groups in the three northern Iraqi Kurdish provinces of Sulaymaniyah, Irbil and Dihok.

Al-Maliki said he was keen to maintain healthy relations with Turkey and "an increase in political dialogue was the way ... not adopting a military action" to solve the Kurdish rebel issue.

Babacan used his high-profile visit to reassure Iraq that Turkey wants a diplomatic solution to the problem of Kurdish rebel bases.

But Babacan rejected a truce offer made by the PKK on Monday in return for an end to Turkish military action.

"Ceasefire is an issue between two countries and two armies and not with a terror organization," he said.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani - also a Kurd - has said Baghdad is unable to capture and hand over PKK rebels based in Iraq as requested by Ankara.

In London, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara had still not ruled out military action, sanctioned by parliament last week.

Washington said yesterday it may provide Turkey with intelligence to help its armed forces strike Kurdish rebels based in Iraq, but downplayed talk of joint military operations.

Washington uses the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey to supply its forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and fears unilateral military action by Turkey could wreck efforts to stabilize Iraq.

Firat news agency, which has close links to the Kurdish rebels, published what it said were pictures of eight Turkish soldiers taken hostage by the guerrillas, Reuters reported.

The Sun Herald

Bush the biggest spender since LBJ

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 1

Section: C

Byline: By MARC LIFSHER, LOS ANGELES TIMES

McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

George W. Bush, despite all his recent talk about being an apostle of small government and budget-slashing, is the biggest spending president since Lyndon B. Johnson. In fact, he's arguably an even bigger spender than LBJ.

"He's a big government guy," said Stephen Slivinski, the director of budget studies at Cato Institute, a libertarian research group.

The numbers are clear, credible and conclusive, added David Keating, the executive director of the Club for Growth, a budget-watchdog group.

"He's a big spender," Keating said. "No question about it."

Take almost any yardstick and Bush generally exceeds the spending of his predecessors.

When adjusted for inflation, discretionary spending - or budget items that Congress and the president can control, including defense and domestic programs, but not entitlements such as Social Security and Medicare - shot up at an average annual rate of 5.3 percent during Bush's first six years, Slivinski calculates.

That tops the 4.6 percent annual rate Johnson logged during his 1963-69 presidency. By these standards, Ronald Reagan was a tightwad; discretionary spending grew by only 1.9 percent a year on his watch.

Discretionary spending went up in Bush's first term by 48.5 percent, not adjusted for inflation, more than twice as much as Bill Clinton did (21.6 percent) in two full terms, Slivinski reports.

Defense spending is the big driver, but not the only one.

Under Bush it's grown on average by 5.7 percent a year. Under LBJ - who had a war to fund, too - it rose by 4.9 percent a year. Both numbers are adjusted for inflation.

Including costs for fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, defense spending under Bush has gone up 86 percent since 2001, according to Chris Hellman of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. Current annual defense spending - not counting war costs - is 25 percent above the height of the Reagan-era buildup, Hellman said.

Homeland security spending also has soared, to about

\$31 billion last year, triple the pre-9/11 number.

But Bush's super-spending is about far more than defense and homeland security.

Brian Riedl, a budget analyst at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative research group, points to education spending. Adjusted for inflation, it's up 18 percent annually since 2001, thanks largely to Bush's No Child Left Behind act.

The 2002 farm bill, he said, caused agriculture spending to double its 1990s levels.

Then there was the 2003 Medicare prescription drug benefit - the biggest single expansion in the program's history - whose 10-year costs are estimated at more than \$700 billion.

And the 2005 highway bill, which included thousands of "earmarks," or special local projects stuck into the legislation by individual lawmakers without review, cost \$295 billion.

"He has presided over massive increases in almost every category... a dramatic change of pace from most previous presidents," said Slivinski.

The White House counters by noting that Bush took office as the country was heading into a recession, then reeled from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"This president had to overcome some things that required additional spending," said Sean Kevelighan, a White House budget office spokesman.

Bush does have other backers. Diana Furchtgott-Roth, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative research group, blamed a Congress that was eager to show constituents how generous it could be. (Republicans ran that Congress until January. Bush never vetoed a single GOP spending bill.)

Bush says Congress is proposing to spend \$22 billion more in fiscal 2008 than the \$933 billion he requested for discretionary programs - and that the \$22 billion extra would swell over five years to \$205 billion.

And so, the president told an Arkansas audience earlier this month, people should brace for "what they call a fiscal showdown in Washington."

"The Congress gets to propose and, if it doesn't meet needs as far as I'm concerned, I get to veto," he said. "And that's precisely what I intend to do."

Bush is getting tough on fiscal policy - after running

up a record as the most profligate spender in at least 40 years.

"The spending did happen," said Keating, "and a lot of it shouldn't have happened."

The Wichita Eagle

French measure requires DNA test for immigrants

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 6

Section: A

PARIS -- French lawmakers adopted a hotly contested bill on Tuesday that would institute language exams and potential DNA testing for prospective immigrants, making it more difficult for families to join loved ones in France.

The DNA amendment, the most controversial aspect of the legislation, is meant to ensure that claims of family ties are true. It was added as a way to ensure that visa-seekers were not using fraudulent papers, common in some African countries.

While the expensive test is optional, critics fear it would be viewed as mandatory by those hoping to join family members in France.

NATO troops clash with rebels in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan -- NATO and Afghan troops called in airstrikes during a battle against insurgents in central Afghanistan, killing 20 suspected militants and several civilians, officials said Tuesday.

In a separate clash in eastern Afghanistan, a NATO soldier was killed and two others were wounded Tuesday during a firefight with insurgents in Kunar province, NATO said.

In the central Afghanistan clash on Monday, NATO said 50 insurgents were trying to set up an ambush and fighter aircraft dropped two bombs on their position. The casualty figures varied widely.

The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)

Things to see and do in Your community; Local events for Kitchener, Cambridge, Waterloo and the Region

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: B3

Section: Local

Arts Events

THURSDAY, OCT. 25

WATERLOO

Film Screening

Shake Hands with the Devil, 7:30 p.m.; free, hosted by WPIRG; EIT 1015, University of Waterloo, Waterloo; 519-888-4882.

SATURDAY, OCT. 27

BADEN

Ascertaining Spirits: Adults Only Halloween Party

Storytelling, visit with psychics, castle tours, food, 7 to 10 p.m.; \$25 advance; Castle Kilbride, Snyder's Rd., Baden; 519-634-8444.

SUNDAY, OCT. 28

KITCHENER

Coverlets and Canopies

Getting the beds and bedding ready for winter, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Sunday 1 to 5 p.m.); \$2.25, \$1.50 senior, \$1.25 child, \$5 family; Joseph Schneider Haus, 466 Queen St. S., Kitchener; to Oct. 29; 519-742-7752.

WATERLOO

Waterloo Central Railway Halloween Excursion

Costumes encouraged, prizes, snacks, 1 to 4 p.m.; Visitor and Heritage Information Centre, 10 Father David Bauer Dr., Waterloo; 519-885-2297.

Blood donor clinics

ONGOING

GUELPH

Guelph Blood Donor Clinics

Mondays 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2:30 to 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 4 to 8 p.m.; Thursdays 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2:30 to 7 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 130 Silvercreek Parkway North; for appointment call 1-888-236-6283; Guelph.

WATERLOO

K-W Blood Donor Clinic

Mondays, 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.; Tuesdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 to 8 p.m.; Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2:30 to 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays, 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; call 1-888-236-6283 to book an appointment; 94 Bridgeport Rd. E. (beside Sobeys), Waterloo.

Free/benefit concerts

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 24

KITCHENER

Noon-Hour Recitals

John Vandertuin (organ), 12:15 to 12:45 p.m.; free (lunch available or bring your own); St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener.

WATERLOO

Roman Rudnytsky (piano)

12:30 p.m.; free; Conrad Grebel University College chapel, University of Waterloo; 519-885-0220.

THURSDAY, OCT. 25

KITCHENER

King Sunshine

With Kid Street, 9 p.m.; \$10 at the door, proceeds to the Children's Museum; Wax Nightclub, 125 King St. W., Kitchener; 519-744-4403.

SATURDAY, OCT. 27

KITCHENER

Waterloo Regional Police Male Chorus

With Foundation Christian School choirs, 7 p.m.; free-will offering; Hope Lutheran Church, 30 Shaftsbury Dr., Kitchener; 519-664-0110.

WATERLOO

Toronto Children's Choir

6 p.m.; \$10, \$5 child, fundraiser for AIDS work in Kenya; Emmanuel United Church, 22 Bridgeport Rd. W.; 519-886-1471, 519-725-2369.

ONGOING

WATERLOO

Auditions

For Voca Mocha show choir, for young adults to 30-something, Tuesdays; Parkminster United Church, Erb St., Waterloo; to Nov. 27; 519-885-0790.

Detours

ONGOING

KITCHENER

Duke Street

Shanley Street to Stahl Avenue; to Nov. 30.

Duke Street West

Shanley to Wellington streets; Kitchener; to Nov. 30.

Ellen Street

Victoria to Queen streets; Kitchener; to Nov. 9.

Gaukel Street

Charles to Joseph streets; Kitchener; to Oct. 31.

Guelph Street

Moore Avenue to Waterloo Street; Kitchener; to Nov. 30.

Joseph Street

Water to David streets; Kitchener; to Oct. 30.

Stonybrook Drive

From Greenbrook Dr. to Ruskview Rd.; to Nov. 24.

TOWNSHIP OF NORTH

DUMFRIES

Northumberland Street

Regional Rd. 58 at Highway 401, full closure; Township of North Dumfries; to Dec. 1.

Donations/ Thank Yous

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 24

KITCHENER/BRANTFORD

Blue Knights International Motorcycle Club

The Kitchener/Brantford Ontario VI Chapter of the Blue Knights International Motorcycle Club whose members are law enforcement officers, donated \$250 to the Brantford branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the form of food articles.

ONGOING

WATERLOO REGION

Did you know?

You can send us the results of your fundraising efforts for local charity or non-profit organizations. We'll include the information in our Donations and Thank Yous category on this page. Mail to: Community Events, 160 King St. E., Kitchener, Ont., N2G 4E5; e-mail to: calendar@therecord.com; fax to: 519-894-3829.

Events

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 24

Bead Work Lecture

Learning about and buying beads in other lands with Debi Keir-Nicholson; \$5; 7:30 p.m.; Joseph Schneider Haus Museum, 466 Queen St. S.; 519-742-7752.

FRIDAY, OCT. 26

CAMBRIDGE/GALT

An Eve of Learning and Libations

Elizabeth Ewan from University of Guelph, Scottish studies department, telling tale of the women brewers of medieval Scotland; sampling Cambridge's own Grand River brews; brewer David Lee revealing his art; \$10; 7 to 9 p.m.; call to register; McDougall Cottage, 89 Grand Ave. S., Cambridge/ Galt; 519-624-8250.

SATURDAY, OCT. 27

CAMBRIDGE/GALT

War of 1812 Drill Demonstration

41st Regiment of Foot, a re-created British unit, conducting a military drill demonstration; 10:30 a.m. to noon; free; Centennial Park, Spruce and Main streets; 519-620-9506.

Artist at Work: Knitters' Month

From K-W Knitters' Guild; demonstrations by Ada Meyers; 1 to 3 p.m.; free; Kitchener Public Library, 85 Queen St. N., Kitchener; 519-743-0271.

WATERLOO

Pan-Canadian Day of Action Against the War in Afghanistan

Movement supporting peace and bringing our troops home; march and rally, beginning at noon, with speakers to follow; near Clay and Glass Museum, Erb and Caroline streets, Waterloo; 519-500-1878.

MONDAY, OCT. 29

Celebrate Islamic History Month

With Islamic History Month Canada Group; Istanbul: capital of the Ottomans in 15th and 16th centuries; 7 p.m.; free; Kitchener Public Library, 85 Queen St. N., Kitchener; 519-743-0271.

Grand River Community Metis Council Charter Signing

Seeking all Metis Nation of Ontario members or those seeking their aboriginal roots; Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO) president Tony Belcourt and vice chair Gary Lipinski attending; 7 p.m.; Conestoga College, Doon Campus, Rm. 1E05, Kitchener; 519-648-3548.

Ideas and Issues: Witchcraft in Popular Culture

Lecture by Chris Klassen, department of religion and culture, Wilfrid Laurier University; noon to 12:50 p.m.; free; Kitchener Public Library, auditorium, 85 Queen St. N., Kitchener; 519-743-0271.

ONGOING

Edna Staebler Research Fellowship

Open for applicants; for research adjudged to increase knowledge and expand understanding of the cultures of the folk and founding peoples of Waterloo Region/Waterloo County; sponsored by Friends of Joseph Schneider Haus; accompanied by stipend of \$1,000; due on or before 5 p.m. Monday, Nov. 5; Fellow or joint Fellows announced at Schneider Haus Christmas reception, Dec. 7; Joseph Schneider Haus, 466 Queen St. S.; 519-742-7752.

WATERLOO AND

CAMBRIDGE

Junior Achievement Company Program Registration

After-school program for high school students in grades 9 to 12 commencing Oct. 29; weekly from Oct. to April; providing emerging entrepreneurs with opportunity to develop business skills while planning and implementing a short-term venture; mentors available; Monday evenings at St. David Catholic Secondary School, Waterloo; Tuesday evenings at Jacob Hespeler Secondary School, Cambridge; call to register; Waterloo and Cambridge; to Oct. 29; 519-576-6610.

For seniors

ONGOING

55 Plus Employment Services

Free specialized job search assistance program; call for information; Rockway Centre, 1405 King St. E., Kitchener; 519-741-2509.

WATERLOO

City of Waterloo 55 Plus Adult Drop-In Program

Playing cards, board games, reading the paper, making new friends; \$2; come for an hour or the afternoon; Thursdays, to Dec. 20, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.; Brick Brewing Company, Red Baron Lounge, 181 King St. S., Waterloo; 519-579-1020.

Waterloo Research in Aging Participant Pool

Researchers at University of Waterloo looking for healthy older adults (ages 60 to 85); research aimed at learning more about aging process; including studies on memory, movement, cardiovascular health; 200 University Ave. W.; 519-888-4567, ext. 37776.

Fundraisers

THURSDAY, OCT. 25

FemFest: A Celebration of Women

Presented by K-W Sexual Assault Support Centre, working to end sexual violence against women and children and supporting female survivors and their friends and families; pampering stations, silent auction, tarot readings, health and wellness information, promoting women in business; \$20 in advance, \$25 at door; 7 to 10 p.m.; Walper Terrace Hotel, Crystal Ballroom, Kitchener; 519-571-0121.

FRIDAY, OCT. 26

Ghost Cup Charity Ice Hockey Tournament

Men playing 5 on 5 non-contact A and B division, 19 and over; activities: charity poker tournament, \$50 buy in, Saturday, 5 p.m., call to sign up; pasta fundraiser dinner, Saturday, noon to 6 p.m.; silent auctions featuring over 100 items, Saturday; 50/50 draws; activities for kids; raising money for underprivileged children to play hockey; organized by Canadian Charity Hockey Organization; admission to games and supporting the cause free; The Aud, 400 East Ave.; to Oct. 28; 1-519-551-5782.

SATURDAY, OCT. 27

ELMIRA

Charity Quilt Auction and Country Market

Sponsored by Elmira and District Association for Community Living; lunch counter, baking, produce; general auction, 8 a.m.; quilt auction at noon; Riverdale Poultry Express, 6811 Line 83, Elmira; 519-669-3205.

Thrill the World, Kitchener-Waterloo

Learning the Thriller dance; raising money for Reaching Our Outdoor Friends (RÖOF); being part of possibly the world's largest simultaneous dance; 12:30 to 6:30 p.m.; free, call to register and for pledge forms; Atlas Yoga Studio, 123 Charles St., Kitchener; 519-584-2510.

SUNDAY, OCT. 28

CAMBRIDGE/GALT

Stop for Tea: Firefighters' Tea Party

Finger sandwiches, scones, sweets and something with a Portuguese flair; fashion show featuring fashion from Southworks Mall, Cambridge, modelled by sizzling firefighters; door prizes, raffle, goodie bag for each guest; \$40; proceeds assisting Fire Hall Museum and Education Centre's educational programs; 2 to 4:30 p.m.; Portuguese Club of Cambridge, Townline Road; 519-622-0252.

ONGOING

CAMBRIDGE

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cambridge Big Raffle

Two great prizes: round trip for two to any WestJet destination in Canada, and 37 inch Sharp Aquos LCD HD television; \$5, 3 for \$10; funds raised supporting mentoring programs in Cambridge and North Dumfries; draw: Dec. 19, noon; 519-624-7655.

NEW HAMBURG/

Women's Shelter Christmas Hamper Drive

Helping fill Christmas hampers with unused bath products; donations added to hampers and given to local women's shelters at Christmastime; suggestions: shampoo, soap, lotion, bath gel, makeup, body poufs, cosmetic bags (product samples, too); donations accepted until Dec. 1; drop-off locations: 60 Nithview Dr., New Hamburg, or Gymboree Play and Music, 871 Victoria St. N., Kitchener, or call 519-662-9613 for pick up.

Gardening

FRIDAY, OCT. 26

WATERLOO

Waterloo Horticultural Society General Meeting

Guest speaker: Pam Charbonneau, turf grass specialist, University of Guelph; \$2 or \$1 at door; 7:30 p.m.; new memberships available at meeting; Adult Recreation Centre, 185 King St. S., Waterloo; 519-886-3407.

MONDAY, OCT. 29

AYR

Ayr Horticultural Society

Hosting Martin Newmann from Grand River Conservation Authority on history of forestry in our region; register for making a Christmas centrepiece, Nov. 26; 7:30 p.m.; Ayr Firehall, Ayr; 519-632-8628.

Kids' stuff

FRIDAY, OCT. 26

BADEN

A Family Halloween

Castle tours, creepy bug collection, costumed characters, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.; \$5, \$15 family; Castle Kilbride, Snyder's Rd., Baden; 519-634-8444.

Heritage Haunted Barn

6:30 to 10:30 p.m.; \$10; J. Steckle Heritage Homestead, 811 Bleams Rd., Kitchener; to Oct. 28; 519-585-1624.

SATURDAY, OCT. 27

CAMBRIDGE

Halloween Carnival

Games, costume contest, treats, prizes, 1 to 4 p.m.; \$7 family, hosted by Waterloo Regional Block Parents; Cambridge Centre Mall ice centre, Hespeler Rd., Cambridge; 519-745-8410.

Harvest Fun Fair

Indoor games and treats, 10 a.m. to noon, hosted by People of the Word Faith Ministries; St. John's on the Hill United Church, 241 Cedar St.; 519-650-5842.

Family Fun Days

Haunted barn, wagon rides, games, storytelling, food, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Sunday noon to 5 p.m.); \$5; J. Steckle Heritage Homestead, 811 Bleams Rd., Kitchener; to Oct. 28; 519-748-4690.

WATERLOO

Family Halloween Spooktacular

Face-painting, games, crafts, 2 to 5 p.m.; \$1; Waterloo Community Arts Centre, 25 Regina St. S., Waterloo; 519-886-4577.

SUNDAY, OCT. 28

WATERLOO

Halloween Carnival

Games, costume contest, treats, prizes, 1 to 4 p.m.; \$7 family, hosted by Waterloo Regional Block Parents; RIM Park, 2001 University Ave., Waterloo;

519-745-8410.

ONGOING

Girls Drop-in Program

Games, theme nights, leadership opportunities, 6:15 to 9 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, hosted by YWCA; Downtown Community Centre, 35 Weber St. W., Kitchener; 519-576-8856, ext. 115.

WATERLOO

Dinosaurs, Rocks, Minerals and More

Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; free; Earth Sciences Museum, University of Waterloo; 519-888-4567, ext. 32469.

Open houses/ reunions

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 24

Oct. 31; Centre for Research and Education in Human Services 25th Anniversary

Keynote speaker: Lesley Cooper, dean, faculty of social work, Wilfrid Laurier University; unveiling of new name; launching new website; presenting Helmut Braun Scholarship Award; light lunch provided; noon to 1:15 p.m.; presentations begin, 12:15 p.m.; if attending call by Oct. 24; Centre Office, 73 King St. W., Suite 300; 519-741-1318.

Sales/bazaars

ONGOING

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Libraries Used Book Sale

Adult and children's fiction and nonfiction books, magazines, cassettes, cds and videos, ranging in price from 50 cents to \$2; during regular operating hours; at Hespeler, Clemens Mill, Preston and Queen's Square locations; to Oct. 26.

School events

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 24

WATERLOO

Drug Awareness Presentation

Frances Moriarty from Community Link Empowered Against Narcotics (C.L.E.A.N.) and Constable Peter Barbuto, Waterloo Regional Police, sharing knowledge and experience of harmful effect of drugs on young people and their families; organized by Waterloo Collegiate Institute Parent Council; 7 p.m.; Waterloo Collegiate Institute, Lecture Hall, 300 Hazel St., Waterloo; 519-747-3814.

SATURDAY, OCT. 27

Thrill the World

Students thrilling the world while raising funds and awareness for HopeSpring Cancer Support Centre in Waterloo; under direction of teacher Julia Turzanski attempting to break Guinness World Record for largest simultaneous dance to Michael Jackson's song Thriller; people around the globe participating in event at same time; raffles; sale of pink ribbons; adult \$8, student \$5; countdown to 6 p.m.; presentations to 7:30 p.m.; Resurrection Catholic Secondary School, 455 University Ave. W., Kitchener; 519-741-1990.

Slide shows

THURSDAY, OCT. 25

WATERLOO

Spain

Slides shown by David Williams; presented by Gilbert and Sullivan Society as a fundraiser for the Society; \$3; 7:30 p.m.; Waterloo Adult Recreation Centre, 185 King St. S., Waterloo; 519-746-9191.

HOW TO GET YOUR EVENT LISTED

Be sure to include:

Name of organization.

Brief description of event.

When and where it takes place.

Contact name and number.

Admission charge.

Date by which tickets must be purchased or reservations made, if applicable.

Deadline:

Two weeks before event.

Where to send it:

Community Events 160 King St. E. Kitchener, Ont.

N2G 4E5

By e-mail:

calendar@therecord.com

By fax:

519-894-3829

The calendar of events is for non-profit or charitable community groups. Publication of your listing cannot be guaranteed.

For more community events, see Thursday's NightLife and Saturday's etc. For complete listings, go online to www.therecord.com.

The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)

Seeking future energy options; Invitation-only conference will benefit from a world of experience

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: B1

Section: Local

Dateline: WATERLOO

Source: RECORD STAFF; With files from the Toronto Star

More than 200 people from 25 countries gather in Waterloo this weekend to talk about energy and the environment.

The third annual conference at the Centre for International Governance Innovation will be held Friday and Saturday.

Attendance is by invitation only and members of the public cannot attend, although reporters will be allowed at some sessions.

This year's conference is called A Moment of Truth: Towards Sustainable Energy Futures.

Participants will examine the role of international governance institutions in addressing environmental sustainability.

"Energy and climate-change issues are a critical challenge facing human beings," said the centre's Ramesh Thakur.

Guest speakers include Angel Gurría, secretary general for the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, and Louise Frechette, former deputy secretary general of the United Nations who is now heading a project at the Waterloo centre on nuclear energy and the world's security. She will present her findings Saturday.

Former prime minister Paul Martin is expected at the conference on Friday as well as Gary Lunn, the minister of natural resources.

The annual meeting of the centre's board of governors will be held Sunday.

The conference begins the day after another international gathering in Waterloo, spearheaded by the governance centre's chair, Jim Balsillie of Research In Motion. Balsillie and experts from around the world are launching an enterprise aimed at putting the hot-button international issues of the day front and centre in Canada.

Tomorrow night, a five-star audience of politicians, pundits and corporate executives will be mustering at a gala fundraiser for the new Canadian International Council, a foreign policy research think tank that will be a forum for some of Canada's best brains.

"The need has never been greater," Balsillie said. "When you open the paper any day the big issues are

global warming, energy security, Arctic sovereignty, Iraq, Afghanistan, humanitarian crises. It's a perfect storm."

Yet, he said, in the last federal election there was a deafening silence around foreign policy issues. And for the leaders, no public debate.

"We want that to change," said Balsillie, co-CEO of Research In Motion. "It happens in the United States and other countries. Why not here?"

The new council, modelled on powerful groups like the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations and London's Chatham House, will promote debate on foreign policy and international relations, and publish work by an assorted group of research fellows.

For experts who are often struggling to promote their views, "it's like Christmas Day," said Douglas Goold, the president of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs.

Goold will head the new council and Balsillie will be the chair.

The institute will merge with the new body, whose partners will be the Centre for International Governance Innovation and the University of Toronto's Munk Centre for International Studies. It will also have links with francophone policy groups, and academics and Canadian universities.

"What we have now are a lot of smaller institutions whose voices aren't really heard," said John English, executive director of the Centre for International Governance Innovation. "This will be a place for solid research, and where the media can call for comment on everything from Arctic sovereignty to Afghanistan."

Among the guests at the dinner will be Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier and senior foreign affairs officials. The keynote address is by Mexican economist and diplomat Angel Gurría, secretary-general of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Balsillie, who has committed about \$80 million to boost Canada's profile in international affairs, kicked off the project with \$1 million. It is already on the way to raising an additional \$2 million for an inaugural budget.

"It only takes \$3 million a year to keep 25 fellows going," Balsillie said. "I'm optimistic that it will work. It will be high-functioning, well resourced and accountable. People want to be part of something successful."

The council will be the most ambitious independent international policy organization in Canada and give a forum to people with a wide range of political views.

"We're not saying what the research should be about," Balsillie said. "Our fellows will work harder than they ever have in their lives. But we're giving them a bigger megaphone."

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The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)

Caption Only: World at one table

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

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Section: Local

Illustrations: Photo: RECORD STAFF / Husnah Homayoun, 7, stands next to her brother Bellal, 8, mother Nabila and sister Hannah, 4, with a tray of traditional Afghanistan food last night as Howard Robertson Public School in Kitchener hosted its second annual Multicultural night.

NO TEXT

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Agence France Presse (English)

US to push NATO allies for Afghan reinforcements

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
Section: International News
Dateline: NOORDWIJK
Time: 08:48:00 GMT
Priority: Urgent

NOORDWIJK, Netherlands, Oct 24, 2007 (AFP) - The United States was to press its European allies Wednesday to provide more troops and equipment to combat the insurgency in Afghanistan, at NATO defence ministers' talks in the Netherlands.

At a two-day meeting in the coastal town of Noordwijk, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates was expected to buttonhole the allies for reinforcements, with the US military increasingly stretched by fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Thirty-seven nations are contributing around 40,000 troops to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, which is battling to extend the rule of the weak central government across the country.

ISAF commanders have requested more combat troops, helicopters and aircraft, as well as trainers to help bring fledgling Afghan soldiers up to a standard where they can provide security on their own.

But countries doing the lion's share of the fighting -- the US, Britain and Canada -- feel let down that their allied partners are still unwilling to deploy troops to the volatile south and east of Afghanistan.

"We expect NATO allies and EU partners to meet their responsibility in sharing the risks and costs of collective action," British Defence Secretary Des Browne told parliament last week.

"The contribution of some European nations is quite disappointing," he said.

In a sign of growing US exasperation, Gates has even let speculation mount that Washington might withdraw its 1,800 troops from Kosovo, in Europe's backyard, after next summer to plug holes in Afghanistan.

Yet the importance of NATO's mission in Afghanistan -- its biggest and most ambitious operation ever -- cannot be overstated.

The strife-torn country's mountainous border area with Pakistan has proved a training ground for extremists -- including Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network -- and a platform for launching attacks around the world.

And under pressure from drug lords, not to mention Taliban rebels desperate for money to buy weapons, Afghan farmers are producing around 90 percent of the opium that reaches Europe's streets in the form of heroin.

But four years into NATO's mission -- the alliance took over ISAF in 2003 -- mounting troop and civilian casualties, the latter often caused by air strikes used when soldiers have been lacking, are turning public opinion.

A survey in Canada in August showed that solid majorities of people in Britain, France, Germany and Italy thought the ISAF-mission was a failure, while almost one in two Canadians agreed.

The Netherlands is expected to renew in coming weeks the mandate of some 1,500 Dutch troops deployed in the southern province of Oruzgan but surveys suggest the majority of Dutch people are against an extension.

In an interview broadcast Tuesday, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said he thought ISAF should focus more on training Afghan security forces and strengthening domestic institutions.

Karzai also told Channel 4 News he was concerned about reports that neighbouring Iran was helping to arm the Islamist Taliban militia and would discuss the issue with Iranian officials.

"The answer to the difficulty in Afghanistan is the strengthening of the Afghan institutions, not adding more troops, from any country to Afghanistan," Karzai told Britain's Channel 4 news.

"We need NATO to train more Afghan forces, we need NATO to train more Afghan police, we need NATO to, or the countries of NATO, to concentrate on enhancing the abilities of the Afghan government, the civil services.

"The strengthening of Afghan institutions, and for Afghans shouldering more of the responsibility, is the way forward," he said.

loc/gh

NATO-unrest

AFP 240848 GMT 10 07

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Lexington Herald-Leader

REDFORD URGES YOUNG PEOPLE TO SPEAK OUT

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
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Robert Redford says he hopes his new film about U.S. military action in Afghanistan, *Lions for Lambs*, will encourage American youth to "take command of their voice." In the United States, "we have lost lives, we have lost sacred freedoms, we have lost financial stability, we have lost our position of respect on the world stage," the Oscar-winning filmmaker told a news conference yesterday in Rome. Redford, 70, said that "the future is going to belong to young people, and young people have to take command of their voice."

'DOONESBURY' STILL DIFFICULT

Garry Trudeau says his *Doonesbury* comic strip hasn't gotten any easier to do in more than 30 years. "I find it really hard," he said. "It's no less hard than when I started," he told students at the Center for Cartoon Studies on Monday in White River Junction, Vt. Trudeau, 59, said, that when one of his characters, B.D., lost a leg in Iraq, what really bothered many readers was that B.D. gave up his helmet. "I heard over and over that that was what really hit people."

CHUCK E'S IN A SNIT

It turns out there's something Chuck E's not in love with. It's his *The Other Side of Town* album. The work, out of print for decades, suddenly re-emerged this month, and Chuck E. Weiss wasn't happy. "It's not that good, man," said the musician and Hollywood hipster best known as the musical muse for Rickie Lee Jones' 1979 song, *Chuck E's in Love*. "Lyrically, I think it's disappointing," Weiss said. The album has generally gotten good reviews.

WOEBEGONE OVER STALKER

Garrison Keillor has gotten a restraining order against a Georgia woman who he claims has made telephone calls and sent him explicit e-mails and disturbing gifts, including a petrified alligator foot and dead beetles. A Ramsey County, Ga., district judge issued the order against Andrea R. Campbell, 43, of Hawkinsville, Ga., last week. Campbell said she received it Monday. Keillor, 65, claimed the harassment started April 28, after Campbell attended a live performance of his public radio show, *A Prairie Home Companion*, in Columbus, Ga. He also alleged Campbell showed up at his home in St. Paul, Minn., in July. Campbell denied the allegations in a telephone interview with the St. Paul Pioneer Press. She said she only wanted to show her gratitude for Keillor's work. "It's transcendental love, that's all" she said. "Between a writer and a reader."

FROM NBC TO SNL

NBC Nightly News' Brian Williams reportedly will become the first network news anchor to host NBC's *Saturday Night Live* -- on Nov. 3.

TRUMP TO MEDIATE ON TV

The *Hollywood Reporter* says Donald Trump is cooking up a syndicated daytime gabfest in which he would mediate for people who have financial disputes, including divorce. The show is to debut next year, when Trump will also be back on prime time with a celebrity edition of *The Apprentice*, featuring Stephen Baldwin, Gene "The Tongue" Simmons, Taxi star Marilu Henner, and frequent TV show guest Omarosa.

The Miami Herald

GOVERNMENT SPENDING: Bush is biggest spender since LBJ, analysts say

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

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Section: A

Byline: BY DAVID LIGHTMAN, McClatchy News Service

President Bush, despite all his recent bravado about being an apostle of small government and budget-slashing, is the biggest-spending president since Lyndon B. Johnson. In fact, he's arguably an even bigger spender than LBJ.

"He's a big government guy," said Stephen Slivinski, the director of budget studies at Cato Institute, a libertarian research group in Washington.

The numbers are clear, credible and conclusive, added David Keating, the executive director of the Club for Growth, a budget watchdog group in Washington. "He's a big spender."

Take almost any yardstick and Bush generally exceeds the spending of his predecessors.

When adjusted for inflation, discretionary spending -- or budget items that Congress and the president can control, including defense and domestic programs, but not entitlements such as Social Security and Medicare -- shot up at an average annual rate of 5.3 percent during Bush's first six years, Slivinski calculated.

That tops the 4.6 percent annual rate Johnson logged during his 1963-69 presidency. By these standards, Ronald Reagan was a tightwad; discretionary spending grew by only 1.9 percent a year on his watch.

Discretionary spending went up in Bush's first term by 48.5 percent, not adjusted for inflation, more than twice as much as it did under President Bill Clinton (21.6 percent) in two full terms, Slivinski reports.

NOT JUST DEFENSE

Defense spending is the big driver -- but hardly the only one.

Under Bush, it's grown on average by 5.7 percent a year. Under Johnson -- who had a war to fund, too -- it rose by 4.9 percent a year. Both numbers are adjusted for inflation.

Including costs for fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, defense spending under Bush has gone up 86 percent since 2001, according to Chris Hellman of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington. Current annual defense spending -- not counting war costs -- is 25 percent above the height of the Reagan-era buildup, Hellman said. Homeland security spending also has soared, to about \$31 billion last year, triple the figure before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

But Bush's super-spending is about far more than defense and homeland security.

Brian Riedl, a budget analyst at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative research group, points to education spending. Adjusted for inflation, it's up 18 percent annually since 2001, thanks largely to Bush's No Child Left Behind Act.

The 2002 farm bill, he said, caused agriculture spending to double its 1990s levels.

Then there was the 2003 Medicare prescription drug benefit -- the biggest single expansion in the program's history -- whose 10-year costs are estimated at more than \$700 billion.

And the 2005 highway bill, which included thousands of special local projects stuck into the legislation by individual lawmakers without review, cost \$295 billion. "He has presided over massive increases in almost every category . . . a dramatic change of pace from most previous presidents," Slivinski said.

DIFFICULT TIME

The White House counters by noting that Bush took office as the country was heading into a recession, then reeled from 9/11. "This president had to overcome some things that required additional spending," said Sean Kevelighan, a White House budget office spokesman.

Now Bush says Congress is proposing to spend \$22 billion more in fiscal 2008 than the \$933 billion he requested for discretionary programs, and he has threatened a veto.

So Bush is getting tough on fiscal policy -- after running up a record as the most prolific spender in at least 40 years.

The Kansas City Star

GLOBAL EXCERPTS: Maternal triumph; praise for Jindal

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Page: 8

Section: B

Praise for Jindal

From the Hindustan Times, New Delhi, India

Bobby Jindal, the Republican Formerly Known as Piyush Jindal, has become the governor of Louisiana. But before one breaks into a bhangra in the barn, it would be useful to note that Jindal's becoming the youngest governor in the United States has little to do with his roots or race. Jindal has got the top job because of voters perceiving him as the man who can deliver the goods. This is not to deny Jindal our admiration and congratulations. And we are tickled by the fact that Louisiana, not exactly a model for race relations in the past, has chosen a brown neck as its governor. So will there be a time when India chooses chief ministers who aren't from the states' "stock" community?

Maternal triumph

From the Ottawa Citizen, Canada

Among the most depressing images of militant Islam are those celebrating the cult of suicide bombing.

A story out of Afghanistan is a poignant reminder that it doesn't have to be that way. According to police in the southern province of Uruzgan, a 22-year-old man had just put on a suicide vest and was on his way to stage an attack when his mother intervened. His mother actually grabbed the explosive vest, telling the man that "we don't want you to go to paradise this way."

Sadly, as she tried to pull the explosives off her boy, the vest went off. She, her son and several other family members died. This Afghan mother is a hero. Her maternal instinct -- her natural humanity -- triumphed over hatred and fanaticism.

The Kansas City Star

Joint Chiefs chairman answers questions from officers at Fort Leavenworth

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

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Section: A

Byline: By DAWN BORMANN, The Kansas City Star

Adm. Mike Mullen, a career Naval officer who is now chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, came to Fort Leavenworth on Tuesday to gauge the mood of the Army.

"I'd like to hear what's on your mind," said Mullen, just 23 days into his job as the top military adviser to the president.

The mid-career officers at Fort Leavenworth's Command and General Staff College responded with sometimes frank questions about repeated deployments, the extraordinary burdens associated with their careers and concerns about the relationship between America's military and civilian leadership.

As one officer put it, there are "other opportunities that don't require you to be deployed away from your family for years at a time."

Mullen, who has earned a reputation for candid responses, didn't shy away from the issue. He acknowledged that competition from private companies is fierce.

"The one edge we've got," he said, "is this noble calling that we fill."

Mullen's visit was part of a broader tour. He stopped at Fort Sill, Okla., on Tuesday morning, where he faced similar questioning from young officers. He will be at Fort Riley, Kan., for a town hall meeting today.

At Fort Leavenworth, Mullen walked right past the lectern most speakers use and held command at the edge of the stage.

He urged his audience to keep the questions coming, and when he couldn't give a complete answer, he offered to follow up in an e-mail.

The 61-year-old Vietnam veteran discussed some of his plans to sustain America's troop strength and said he doesn't want to go back to his younger days, when the military and the country were bitterly divided.

"We became detached from the American people, and the military broke," Mullen said.

He said he wants to see the military do a better job of planning for everything from potential conflicts in foreign countries to how to look after military spouses and children.

Mullen also said he wants to keep military spending at least at current levels long-term, even after current

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are ended.

He said the spending, which is about 4 percent of the nation's gross domestic product, is essential to rebuild the force, replace equipment and be sure the military is prepared for future missions.

Mullen has expressed concern in the past about a military stretched too thin, and he assured officers on Tuesday that relieving that stress is a priority. But he stopped short of guarantees.

"We're about accomplishing our mission," he said, "and that's got to be the top priority for us."

One thing he was emphatic about: Reinstating the draft is not the way to provide relief for soldiers grown weary of extended deployments.

"This is the best military I think this nation has ever had," Mullen said. "I'm old enough to remember when we were a draft force; that's where I came in, and I'm not anxious to return to that."

Mullen was asked about the prospects of a new president taking office in 15 months, and he acknowledged that any change in senior leadership would be challenging.

"It's very challenging no matter which party takes over," Mullen said. "It has been and always will be."

However, he said, he likes to look at it more positively and sees change as an opportunity. He said he intends to be "a rock" as that transition takes place.

In recent months, some retired officers have harshly criticized the Bush administration's conduct of the war. Most recently, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the former top commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, called the management of the war "incompetent" and said it is "a nightmare with no end in sight."

Sanchez retired in 2006 after being replaced in Iraq in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal.

But Mullen said several times Tuesday how important it is to continue America's tradition of military leaders carrying out the orders of elected leaders, saying to do otherwise raises the specter of military dictatorship.

"We follow our civilian leadership," he said, calling the military "an apolitical organization, and we need to stay that way."

He said the military should take great care not to jeopardize that relationship with civilian leaders.

"I believe those, particularly those of us on active duty, need to carry out our orders. And that if we are unable to belong to an organization that is carrying out political orders, then ... the proper response is to vote with our feet and leave."

Mullen's reception was similar earlier in the day at Fort Sill.

The officers there, who are students in the Artillery Captains Career Course, also asked about recruiting pressures that could leave them supervising more soldiers with discipline problems.

One captain said that during his recent tour in Iraq he spent long hours every night dealing with problem soldiers.

Mullen said that pressure to bring in enough recruits to increase the size of the Army had triggered a greater use of waivers, but he said he had seen no data showing increased disciplinary problems.

"To some degree, the jury's out," said Mullen. "We're very mindful the potential is there."

Mullen said after his Fort Leavenworth visit that he was not surprised by the concerns expressed by officers.

"I think what I heard is what I expected," he said. "It validates where I think we are, and it also validates the need as a priority to figure out a way to relieve that stress."

Military leaders are addressing the issues, he said, and "it's not going to be an overnight fix."

The Reminder (Flin Flon)

Roger's Right Corner

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POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

It was all pomp and circumstance at the reading of Speech from the Throne to re-open parliament last week. A marching honour guard helped with the occasion and the delivery of the speech was carried out extremely well by Governor General Michaëlle Jean.

The government changed the time of the event from the usual early afternoon time slot to prime time, and obviously obtained more viewers. The Liberals were not happy that their leader got a late time to give his one-sentence statement, but they are not happy in general with the unpopular Stéphane Dion.

With his party in single polling digits in Quebec outside of Montreal, the non-leader leader still wanted to defeat the government on the Throne Speech, according to leaks from the Liberal Caucus, but was voted down by a majority who fear an election.

It's so bad for the Liberals that there is talk of them winning only three or four seats in Quebec, as they have been replaced by the Tories as the Bloc's main threat outside of Montreal. Apparently Dion still thinks he can win or perhaps thinks it is better now than later, or maybe he wants to lose and get out.

The day after the speech, Dion made an impassioned 45-minute speech attacking the Conservatives' plans but refuses to defeat them for obvious reasons. Prime Minister Stephen Harper quipped that Dion is reminiscent of a university professor who writes negative comments all over your term paper but then passes you anyway.

Dion was urged by the irresponsible NDP and Bloc to join them in defeating the government, but they are really only after Liberal blood and hope to make gains at Dion's expense. Why the Bloc is acting this way is amazing to observers, as the real danger to them outside Montreal is certainly the Harper government.

NDP leader Jack Layton is the same old Jack, demanding we pull out of Afghanistan, bring in policies for the poor, etc., and becoming more and more critical of the government. He has been emboldened by his recent by-election win in Montreal and by the Liberals' demise. Layton is also looking over his shoulder at the Green party, who may be poised to steal his votes.

REFUSED

The Liberals, as expected, refused to vote against the

Harper plan, even though they are opposed to his environmental proposals and keep harping back to the now dead Kyoto pact. They haughtily claim that they know the Canadian public does not want an election. Translation: We can't win!

Recent polling certainly confirms Dion's distaste for an election. Nationally, polls show the Liberals are at 27 per cent support and are eight points behind even in Liberal-friendly Ontario. With Harper at over 40 per cent support, it could be majority time, but it is highly unlikely an election will be called. After all, the Tories can now govern as if they have one.

The Throne Speech itself was really a rehash of Conservative plans and no surprise to the Opposition or anyone else.

The speech emphasizes a renewed attack on crime and criminals, which most voters favour and the Opposition dares not defeat. As well, there are more tax cuts, support for the Armed Forces, an assertion of Canada's Arctic sovereignty, human rights protection for aboriginals, and a different approach to the greenhouse gas issue.

One aspect of the speech that everyone can support is the honorary citizenship to Burma's embattled opposition leader - a slap in the face to the brutal leadership in that country.

The speech was really not that radical, despite of the Opposition's rants, and seems to have earned the support of the voting public, if one can believe the polls.

The Liberals say they will not vote on the measures, which many feel is an abrogation of their responsibility as Opposition. In any case, Harper is in a win-win situation, at least in the short term.

Roger's Right Corner runs Wednesdays.