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Afghan military needs 10 more years: Hillier

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DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
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WORD COUNT: 258

An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, says Canada's top soldier.

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation yesterday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check, thus allowing Canadian troops to go home.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion — 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

"An army is what's required to allow them to keep their security, so that's a long term project," Hillier said.

"It's going to take 10 years or so just to work through and build an army to whatever the final number that Afghanistan will have, and make them professional and let them meet their security demands here."

Tories accused of lying about Afghan timelines

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The Conservative government was accused yesterday of painting a misleadingly rosy portrait of the situation in Afghanistan that contradicts the view of its own military experts.

The Tories say Afghanistan should be stable enough to handle its own security by 2011 — a view reiterated late yesterday by a spokesperson for Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

But opposition parties pounced on far less cheerful assessments of the situation from two leading authorities: Canada's top soldier and the head of NATO.

Gen. Rick Hillier declared it will probably take "10 years or so" for the Afghan army to meet its security demands — and NATO's secretary-general suggested it could take far longer than that.

The opposition accused Harper of ignoring his own military experts and allies because the truth makes him politically uncomfortable.

"I think General Hillier is telling the truth. And Stephen Harper is in politics," Bloc Qu b cois Leader Gilles Duceppe said.

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said: "Mr. Hillier is the expert and he knows better. Someone lied there."

The head of NATO went even farther than Hillier, casting the Afghan struggle as a generational challenge.

"Development and nation-building is a matter of at least a generation, if not generations," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said.

"My analysis is that NATO will have to be present in Afghanistan in the military sense for the foreseeable future."

When asked about the apparent discrepancy, the government initially dodged by pointing to a commission it's hired to examine Canada's options.

Skeptics have warned that the commission, whose recommendations are non-binding, will serve only one purpose: helping the government avoid questions on Afghanistan for a few months.

Yesterday, that warning appeared prophetic.

"This government has established an independent commission to study the issue and provide advice to this government," Tory House leader Peter Van Loan replied when pressed on the matter.

"It's headed up by the former deputy prime minister John Manley. We anticipate a report to this House which will give the House an opportunity to vote on the best course forward."

That commission was struck when it still seemed possible that the government might collapse on its throne speech and face an election with Afghanistan as a central issue.

The government survived when the Liberals abstained from voting on the Tory policy blueprint.

On Afghanistan, the throne speech said Canadian troops should remain deployed for four more years — and then, by 2011, Afghan forces should be able to defend their own sovereignty.

A spokesperson for Harper reiterated that view yesterday.

"Building up the capacity of the Afghan people so that they can defend their own sovereignty has always been our goal and we know this will not happen overnight," said Harper's communications director, Sandra Buckler.

"However, our Government believes that this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The Liberals did not question the government on the apparent discrepancy during yesterday's question period — choosing instead to spend the entire session asking about government scandals.

But the NDP wanted to know whether Hillier or Harper was telling the truth.

"This is a very serious matter and I think the Prime Minister needs to respond," NDP Leader Jack Layton said afterwards.

"We got glib responses . . . This is an enormous discrepancy and it does come down to who's telling the truth about this war."

Canadian soldier charged in death of friend; Mother of slain reservist says she's sure it was an accident

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: THE CANADIAN PRESS / Cpl. Matthew Wilcox (left) hasbeen charged with manslaughter and criminal negligence causing death in the March 6 death of Cpl. Kevin Megeney. ; Photo: THE CANADIAN PRESS / Cpl. Kevin Megeney ;

DATELINE: HALIFAX

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 680

The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said yesterday she feels "very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders, who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter. "We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

"I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

"Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said in an interview from Ottawa.

"The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

Garrick said he couldn't release any details of what is alleged to have happened in the incident since the case could go before a court martial in the coming months.

Family members have said they're eager for the process to move forward since they still have little insight into what happened to Megeney, a 25-year-old reservist who was a friend of Wilcox.

Canadian soldier charged in death of friend; Mother of slain reservist says she's sure it was an accident

"We're just looking at it as another step to finding out the truth," Megeney said from the home where the red-headed soldier was raised. "We don't know anything about what happened that day."

The two soldiers were said to be good friends when they deployed together from their base in central Nova Scotia in December and shared a tent, where Garrick said they were prohibited from carrying loaded weapons.

Megeney's father, Dexter Megeney, said he wants the case to proceed but isn't seeking revenge for the death of his son, who became the 45th Canadian soldier to die there since the Canadian mission began in 2002. Seventy soldiers and one diplomat have died on the mission to date.

"We're letting them do their job," he said of the military prosecutors. "We're not out for blood or anything."

At the time of the incident, the Megeneys received a call from one of their son's friends telling them he had been shot in the chest in what appeared to be a case of friendly fire. Megeney was rushed to the hospital, but died in the operating room.

The decision to lay the charges comes just weeks after the military ordered another Canadian soldier to face a court martial for similar offences.

Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser will have a military trial on charges of manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in the death of Master Cpl. Jeff Walsh, 33, in Afghanistan on Aug. 9, 2006.

Fraser was originally charged in March. Under military law, several subsequent stages had to be completed before a decision was made on whether to go ahead with a military trial.

Military prosecutors consider two main issues when deciding whether to prosecute a charge at court martial — whether the evidence is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction and whether the public interest requires a prosecution be pursued, a military spokesperson said.

Family members say they were told that Walsh was seated beside the driver of a cramped G-wagon armoured vehicle during a patrol near Kandahar when another soldier's gun discharged inside the vehicle.

It wasn't immediately known how many soldiers have been convicted of negligence in accidental discharges of their weapons since Canada first sent regular troops to Afghanistan early in 2002.

Some have been fined, others have been sentenced to labour, and a few have received both penalties, usually meted out during summary trials in Afghanistan.

Garrick said cases of this nature are rare.

"By and large, the soldiers we have are very well trained and very well skilled and these types of incidents are rare for us," he said.

The Canadian military follows the civilian Criminal Code in defining manslaughter as "culpable homicide" that falls short of murder.

Negligent performance of duty is a violation of the National Defence Act with a maximum penalty of disgraceful dismissal from the Canadian Forces.

Canadian soldier charged in death of friend; Mother of slain reservist says she's sure it was an accident

Cdn. soldier charged in death of fellow reservist; Nova Scotia soldier faces manslaughter charge after gun discharged at Kandahar Airfield, killing friend

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"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home yesterday morning, said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

"I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

"Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said in an interview from Ottawa.

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Cdn. soldier charged in death of fellow reservist; Nova Scotia soldier faces manslaughter charge after gun d

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Tories misleading on Afghan mission: Liberals

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The Conservative government was accused yesterday of painting a misleadingly rosy portrait of the situation in Afghanistan that contradicts the view of its own military experts.

The Tories say Afghanistan should be stable enough to handle its own security by 2011 — a view reiterated late yesterday by a spokeswoman for Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

But opposition parties pounced on far less cheerful assessments of the situation from two leading authorities: Canada's top soldier and the head of NATO.

Gen. Rick Hillier declared it will probably take "10 years or so" for the Afghan army to meet its security demands — and NATO's secretary-general suggested it could take far longer than that.

The opposition accused Harper of ignoring his own military experts and allies because the truth makes him politically uncomfortable.

"I think General Hillier is telling the truth. And Stephen Harper is in politics," Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe said.

The head of NATO went even farther than Hillier, casting the Afghan struggle as a generational challenge.

"Development and nation-building is a matter of at least a generation, if not generations," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told the Globe and Mail.

"My analysis is that NATO will have to be present in Afghanistan in the military sense for the foreseeable future."

When asked about the apparent discrepancy, the government initially dodged by pointing to a commission it's hired to examine Canada's options.

That commission was struck when it still seemed possible that the government might collapse on its throne speech and face an election with Afghanistan as a central issue.

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"This is a very serious matter and I think the Prime Minister needs to respond," NDP Leader Jack Layton said afterwards.

"We got glib responses . . . This is an enormous discrepancy and it does come down to who's telling the truth about this war."

Defence Chief on Afghanistan: Afghan military needs 10 years to go it alone: Hillier; Canada's top soldier says 38,000 current Afghan troops about half what that country needs

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An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, says Canada's top soldier.

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation yesterday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check, thus allowing Canadian troops to go home.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion — 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

After years of work and training, there are about two battalions of Afghan soldiers in Kandahar province. Overall, there's a total of about 38,000 Afghan troops in the country. It may sound good on paper but the number is only about half of what is needed for Afghanistan to provide its own security.

"An army is what's required to allow them to keep their security, so that's a long term project," Hillier said. "It's going to take 10 years or so just to work through and build an army to whatever the final number that Afghanistan will have, and make them professional and let them meet their security demands here."

Hillier's remarks echo those from other NATO leaders who have said Afghanistan will have to be a longterm commitment for members of the alliance.

Canada has about 2,500 troops serving with NATO's International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF. Its mission is to help the Kabul government assert its authority across the fractured country and overcome the

Defence Chief on Afghanistan: Afghan military needs 10 years to go it alone: Hillier; Canada's top soldier sa

security challenges posed by Taliban insurgents, rival warlords and narcotics kingpins.

Most of the Canadians are in Kandahar province, a Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan where some of the the bloodiest fighting has taken place.

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 when the current mandate of the Afghan mission expires in February 2009 -- or even earlier.

"Canada will decide whatever role it's going to play," Hillier said. "The panel is in place and the government will make its decisions."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed a five-person panel, headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, to make recommendations on the future of the mission. The range of options includes the continued training of the Afghan army and police, and withdrawing altogether.

Letters to the editor | Listen to working nurses

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As registered nurses working in New Brunswick, we know the nursing shortage is nothing new.

It was started 10 years ago when the diploma programs closed in favour of a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing as the recruitment for entry to practice. With the closing of five diploma programs In New Brunswick — three English and two French, we lost an influx of about 100 nurses a year.

With no noticeable increase on the number of graduates from university and many of them going elsewhere for better wages, benefits and opportunities, it is not surprise to those of us working day in and day out, that our numbers are dwindling.

To even suggest that retired nurses would come back to work to pick up the slack "out of a love for the job" speaks to the issue registered nurses in this province have lived with for decades: that people in higher positions (i.e. Deans of nursing and chief nursing officers) are out of touch with reality.

Nursing is physically and psychologically demanding. Nurses nearing retirement are looking forward to it. Any nurses choosing to come back following retirement now are doing so for financial reasons, not because they just love being overworked.

Reducing workloads is a nice gesture, but it is not realistic. Hospital units are full to capacity and then some. To reduce workloads, you need to have more staff per shift — and the cycle begins again, not enough nurses.

The dean of UNB, Janice Thompson, is saying the answer is to have a PhD program in the province. This, she believes, will prevent people from leaving to further their studies.

Nurses who further their studies don't look after patients. They do research, teach at universities, become administrators. We don't need more nurses riding a desk. We need more nurses on the front line, caring for the patient in a hospital bed, dealing with emergencies, caring for someone who is ill at home.

If officials are really interested in finding solutions to the nursing shortage, they should talk to a nurse working a 12-hour shift short-handed. That is where the real answer to this issue will be.

Merica Chase, RN, CNCC(C)

Gwen Stevenson, RN, CNCC (C)

Tamara Downey, RN

Marlene Winch, RN

Fredericton

Meaningful debate missing

There is an unfortunate paucity of intelligent and thoughtful political debate in Canada now, and our mission in Afghanistan is one of several issues where this is clearly evident.

The Fredericton Peace Coalition, in its misguided campaign against yellow ribbons, is contributing to the lack of intelligent and thoughtful political debate on this matter.

I object to the knee-jerk accusations of some pro-war zealots who imply that any opposition to or even critical questioning of Canada's role in Afghanistan is akin to not supporting Canadian troops. This is an unfair and illogical accusation.

However, the Fredericton Peace Coalition is employing the same flawed logic in their attacks on yellow ribbons. Their argument is that displaying or wearing a yellow ribbon is the equivalent of not only uncritically supporting our mission in Afghanistan, but also a sign of endorsement for a host of other conspiratorial evils as well. This, too, is an unfair and illogical accusation.

The upshot of the coalition's actions is to further confuse the debate around Afghanistan and instead provoke a meaningless battle about symbols rather than substance.

I am undecided about our role in Afghanistan and seek thoughtful discussion upon which to form an opinion. I do not, however, believe that my uncertainty makes me any less supportive of our troops than someone who is 100 per cent behind our mission there.

Nor do I believe that the many people who display yellow ribbons are in any way mindless or uncaring warmongers either.

These nuances should be self-evident. Yet, unfortunately, circumstances do not make it so. Rather than suggesting yellow ribbons stifle debate, coalition members should argue that yellow ribbons do not have to stifle debate and that their display can co-exist with thoughtful discussion. I believe this to be the case.

If coalition members are truly interested in provoking thoughtful discussion on Canada's role in Afghanistan, they should focus on the actual issues and not attack those who merely display yellow ribbons. Those of us who crave a truly thoughtful and meaningful debate on this issue are not aided by their actions.

Patrick Webber

Fredericton

Volunteer drivers needed

Meals on Wheels of Fredericton needs volunteers to deliver meals.

Meals are delivered between 11 a.m. and noon every day including holidays. Regular volunteers deliver once a week and substitute volunteers are called to deliver when needed. All it takes is one hour.

Each volunteer has an average of seven deliveries.

Each day we need 17 volunteers to deliver more than 125 meals.

This will be one of the most rewarding volunteering experiences you'll have. Children are welcome to go along on deliveries. It's a great way to introduce them to the joys of volunteering.

Meals on Wheels of Fredericton is a non-profit organization which provides nutritious meals and social support to seniors, disabled individuals and those recovering from illness, surgery or injury; to help them in living a healthy and independent lifestyle.

Volunteers are screened, with the costs associated covered by the Meals on Wheels, and provided with orientation and support. For more information please call 458-9482 or e-mail info@frederictonmealsonwheels.ca Thank you.

Anne Marie Hartford

Executive director

Meals on Wheels of Fredericton

Alcohol companies need to take responsible for effects

I recently read about a death caused by a violent crash of two vehicles.

I can imagine the surprise of the driver when he comes out of the drug-induced condition he caused himself to be in.

Imagine the embarrassment.

Why didn't anyone tell him this could be the result if he drank a product that with every sip diminishes the ability to spell the word responsible let alone drink with that attitude in mind?

It is time alcohol makers sold their product more responsibly.

Perhaps if they accepted that this product causes damage, injury and even death when used outside the country club situation with a designated driver on staff or a house party with a host with three spare bedrooms.

Maybe if the industry can accept that advertising does increase consumption, and life isn't always better and less lonely with a bottle in your hand on the beach.

Our friends, family, neighbours are dying on our roads, and that is unacceptable.

There is something that can be done. Some things that come to mind are:

- Labels on bottles and cases reminding the user the incidence of damage, injury and death does increase if you choose to drive after consuming the product;
- Restrictions on the amount of money spent on advertising by the industry.
- Appointing judges less sympathetic to the alcoholic or the drunk driver and more interested in protecting the freedoms of the rest of us.

David W. Airey

Fredericton

NATO to publicize Taliban outrages; Danish to fund purchase of video gear

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.10.26

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B2

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Murray Brewster

DATELINE: NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands

WORD COUNT: 239

When NATO put out a call for more equipment in southern Afghanistan, it was expecting guns and helicopters – not cameras and video–cataloguing gear.

But that's what it got from Denmark: an offer of 1 million euros, or about C\$1.4 million, to buy video equipment that will ultimately be used to deliver documented Taliban outrages to a television near you – or to the popular video website YouTube.

At the end of a two–day informal meeting of defence ministers in the Netherlands, NATO's secretary general reiterated yesterday that the alliance needs to do a better job in public relations both in home countries and Afghanistan.

"What we can do is improve our public messaging," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told reporters.

"Part of that public messaging could be to show to the people – and they can draw their own conclusions – what our opponent, our enemy in Afghanistan, looks like; what they do."

He accused the Taliban of performing "the most horrendous human rights violations."

Two weeks ago, de Hoop Scheffer made a pitch to declassify video surveillance footage shot by NATO forces throughout the Afghan conflict.

Allied countries have a variety of electronic intelligence–gathering means at their disposal.

The Danes responded with an initiative to provide equipment to transfer and catalogue existing video taken by the various countries involved in fighting the insurgency war.

There will also be cameras so that more video can be shot.

The alliance, for all its high–tech hardware and gizmos, does not have such a facility right now, said Canadian Col. Brett Boudreau, a spokesman for Gen. Ray Henault, head of NATO's military council.

Faced with sagging support in countries like Canada and the Netherlands for the Afghan mission, NATO sees the videos as a way of shoring up public opinion.

Afghan security 10 years off: top soldier; Gen. Rick Hillier wraps up three-day visit to Kandahar province

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.10.26

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B2

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Bill Graveland

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 449

An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, says Canada's top soldier.

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation yesterday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check, thus allowing Canadian troops to go home.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion – 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

After years of work and training, there are about two battalions of Afghan soldiers in Kandahar province. Overall, there's a total of about 38,000 Afghan troops in the country. It may sound good on paper but the number is only about half of what is needed for Afghanistan to provide its own security.

"An army is what's required to allow them to keep their security, so that's a long term project," Hillier said.

"It's going to take 10 years or so just to work through and build an army to whatever the final number that Afghanistan will have, and make them professional and let them meet their security demands here."

Hillier's remarks echo those from other NATO leaders who have said Afghanistan will have to be a longterm commitment for members of the alliance.

Canada has about 2,500 troops serving with NATO's International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF. Its mission is to help the Kabul government assert its authority across the fractured country and overcome the security challenges posed by Taliban insurgents, rival warlords and narcotics kingpins.

Most of the Canadians are in Kandahar province, a Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan where some of the the bloodiest fighting has taken place.

Afghan security 10 years off: top soldier; Gen. Rick Hillier wraps up three-day visit to Kandahar province

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 when the current mandate of the Afghan mission expires in February 2009 – or even earlier.

"Canada will decide whatever role it's going to play," Hillier said. "The panel is in place and the government will make its decisions."

Charges laid in soldier's death; Family believes Cpl. Kevin Megeney's death an accident

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.10.26

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Alison Auld

DATELINE: HALIFAX

ILLUSTRATION: Megeney

WORD COUNT: 504

The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said yesterday she feels "very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said.

"They're going through a hard time too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home yesterday morning, said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

"I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

"Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said in an interview from Ottawa.

"The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

Garrick said he couldn't release any details of what is alleged to have happened in the incident since the case could go before a court martial in the coming months.

Family members have said they're eager for the process to move forward since they still have little insight into what occurred to Megeney, a 25-year-old reservist who was a friend of Wilcox.

"We're just looking at it as another step to finding out the truth," Megeney said from the home where the red-headed soldier was raised. "We don't know anything about what happened that day."

The two soldiers were said to be good friends when they deployed together from their base in central Nova Scotia in December and shared a tent, where Garrick said they were prohibited from carrying loaded weapons.

Megeney's father, Dexter Megeney, said he wants the case to proceed but isn't seeking revenge for the death of his son, who became the 45th Canadian soldier to die there since the Canadian mission began in 2002. Seventy soldiers and one diplomat have died on the mission to date.

"We're letting them do their job," he said of the military prosecutors. "We're not out for blood or anything."

At the time of the incident, the Megeneys received a call from one of their son's friends telling them he had been shot in the chest in what appeared to be a case of friendly fire. Megeney was rushed to the hospital, but died in the operating room. The decision to lay the charges comes just weeks after the military ordered another Canadian soldier to go before a court martial for similar offences. Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser will face a military trial on charges of manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in the death of Master Cpl. Jeff Walsh, 33, in Afghanistan on Aug. 9, 2006.

Hillier: Afghan military decade from going it alone; It takes 3 years just to train one battalion, top soldier says

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald

DATE: 2007.10.26

SECTION: World

PAGE: A3

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Bill Graveland

ILLUSTRATION: Chief of Defence Staff Rick Hillier told reporters in Kandahar on Thursday that the Afghanistan mission could use one more battle group to help control the war-torn country. (Bill Graveland / CP)

WORD COUNT: 662

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, says Canada's top soldier.

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation Thursday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check, thus allowing Canadian troops to go home.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

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Most of the Canadians are in Kandahar province, a Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan where some of the bloodiest fighting has taken place.

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 when the current mandate of the Afghan mission expires in February 2009 – or even earlier.

"Canada will decide whatever role it's going to play," Hillier said. "The panel is in place and the government will make its decisions." Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed a five-person panel, headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, to make recommendations on the future of the mission. The range of options includes the continued training of the Afghan army and police, and withdrawing altogether.

But the Harper government's throne speech indicates it wants Canada's direct involvement in Afghanistan to continue until 2011.

In the short-term, Hillier is hoping to get additional support from other NATO allies in terms of helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles and more troops.

"What would be best here would be another manoeuvre battalion group to give us the flexibility to be able to . . . keep a footprint in an area where we've been until the Afghan police and army can take that area over by themselves," Hillier said.

"That will allow us to manoeuvre off to other areas where the Taliban are slightly stronger, and put them on the back foot in those other areas."

"With just the one battle group here, even with the Afghan National Army forces and the police we are now getting here, we still do not have all the capabilities that we have to do."

'You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively.'

Hillier: Afghan military decade from going it alone; It takes 3 years just to train one battalion, top soldier says

Documenting Taliban atrocities; Denmark gives \$1.4 million for video gear

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.10.26
SECTION: World
PAGE: A3
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
WORD COUNT: 329

NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands – When NATO put out a call for more equipment in southern Afghanistan, it was expecting guns and helicopters – not cameras and video–cataloguing gear.

But that's what it got from Denmark: an offer of one million euros, or about C\$1.4 million, to buy video equipment that will ultimately be used to deliver documented Taliban outrages to a television near you – or to the popular video website YouTube.

At the end of a two–day informal meeting of defence ministers in the Netherlands, NATO's secretary general reiterated Thursday that the alliance needs to do a better job in public relations both in home countries and Afghanistan.

"What we can do is improve our public messaging," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told reporters.

"Part of that public messaging could be to show to the people – and they can draw their own conclusions – what our opponent, our enemy in Afghanistan, looks like; what they do."

He accused the Taliban of performing "the most horrendous human rights violations."

Two weeks ago, de Hoop Scheffer made a pitch to declassify video surveillance footage shot by NATO forces throughout the Afghan conflict. Allied countries have a variety of electronic intelligence–gathering means at their disposal.

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The alliance, for all its high–tech hardware and gizmos, does not have such a facility right now, said Canadian Col. Brett Boudreau, a spokesman for Gen. Ray Henault, head of NATO's military council.

Faced with sagging support in countries like Canada and the Netherlands for the Afghan mission, NATO sees the videos as a way of shoring up public opinion.

But one man's YouTube video could be another man's propaganda. De Hoop Scheffer bristled at such a suggestion in questions from a Danish journalist.

"Citizens in Denmark or elsewhere are usually well informed, adult people," the secretary general said.

He said he doesn't think any Danish, Dutch or Norwegian citizen "will be in a position to have himself or herself cheated by NATO propaganda."

"That is definitely not what NATO would do. It is definitely not something I would authorize in any way."

Any declassified footage released by NATO will be "unmanipulated," the secretary general insisted.

Soldier charged in comrade's shooting

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.10.26
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A1
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Alison Auld
ILLUSTRATION: Cpl. Matthew Wilcox (CP); Cpl. Matthew Wilcox(CP)
WORD COUNT: 658

The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said Thursday she feels "very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty. Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9-mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home Thursday morning, said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

"I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

"Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said in an interview from Ottawa.

"The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

Garrick said he couldn't release any details of what is alleged to have happened in the incident since the case could go before a court martial in the coming months.

Family members have said they're eager for the process to move forward since they still have little insight into what occurred to Megeney, a 25-year-old reservist who was a friend of Wilcox.

"We're just looking at it as another step to finding out the truth," Megeney said from the home where the red-headed soldier was raised. "We don't know anything about what happened that day."

The two soldiers were said to be good friends when they deployed together from their base in central Nova Scotia in December and shared a tent, where Garrick said they were prohibited from carrying loaded weapons.

Megeney's father, Dexter Megeney, said he wants the case to proceed but isn't seeking revenge for the death of his son, who became the 45th Canadian soldier to die there since the Canadian mission began in 2002. Seventy soldiers and one diplomat have died on the mission to date.

"We're letting them do their job," he said of the military prosecutors. "We're not out for blood or anything."

At the time of the incident, the Megeney family received a call from one of their son's friends telling them he had been shot in the chest in what appeared to be a case of friendly fire. Megeney was rushed to the hospital, but died in the operating room.

The decision to lay the charges comes just weeks after the military ordered another Canadian soldier to go before a court martial for similar offences.

Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser will face a military trial on charges of manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in the death of Master Cpl. Jeff Walsh, 33, in Afghanistan on Aug. 9, 2006.

Fraser was originally charged in March. Under military law, several subsequent stages had to be completed before a decision was made on whether to go ahead with a military trial.

Military prosecutors consider two main issues when deciding whether to prosecute a charge at court martial – whether the evidence is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction and whether the public interest requires a prosecution be pursued, a military spokesman said.

Family members say they were told that Walsh was seated beside the driver of a cramped G-wagon armoured vehicle during a patrol near Kandahar when another soldier's gun discharged inside the vehicle.

It wasn't immediately known how many soldiers have been convicted of negligence in accidental discharges of their weapons since Canada first sent regular troops to Afghanistan early in 2002.

Some have been fined, others have been sentenced to labour, and a few have received both penalties, usually meted out during summary trials in theatre.

Garrick said cases of this nature are rare.

"By and large, the soldiers we have are very well trained and very well skilled and these types of incidents are rare for us," he said.

Afghan military needs time before going it alone: Hillier

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.10.26

SECTION: World

PAGE: B5

COLUMN: Around the world

WORD COUNT: 321

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The Canadian Press

NATO wants to publicize Taliban outrages on TV

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The Canadian Press

Turkey says U.S. pressure not enough to stop incursion

ISTANBUL, Turkey – Turkey warned Thursday that U.S. objections will not stop its troops from crossing into Iraq to pursue Kurdish separatists, while a steady stream of U.S.-made Turkish fighter jets roared across the skies along the border.

High-level Iraqi officials arrived in Turkey as part of frantic efforts to persuade the government not to order an attack on Kurdish guerrilla bases in northern Iraq, and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq sent American diplomats to join the delegation.

Turkey's leaders have been demanding that U.S. and Iraqi authorities stop Turkish Kurd rebels from staging attacks across the frontier, threatening to send in a large-scale offensive if nothing is done soon.

Turkey still seems willing to refrain from a big attack until at least early next month.

The Associated Press

Soldier charged for death in Afghanistan

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|----------------------|---|
| PUBLICATION: | The Guardian (Charlottetown) |
| DATE: | 2007.10.26 |
| SECTION: | Canada |
| PAGE: | A10 |
| SOURCE: | THE CANADIAN PRESS |
| PHOTO: | Canadian Press photo |
| DATELINE: | HALIFAX |
| ILLUSTRATION: | Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, 21, fills out a personal form at Sydney Garrison, Victoria Park, Sydney, in this December 2006 file photo. Officials with the National Investigation Service said Wilcox has been charged with manslaughter following the shooting death of a colleague in Afghanistan last March. |
| WORD COUNT: | 197 |

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"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home Thursday morning, said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

"I'm sure it was an accident."

Tories charged with lying about mission; Opposition parties press government on timetable for making Afghanistan a stable nation

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.10.26

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A10

SOURCE: THE CANADIAN PRESS

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 267

The Conservative government was accused Thursday of painting a misleadingly rosy portrait of the situation in Afghanistan – but it refused to discuss the charge.

The Tories have maintained Afghanistan can be stabilized in four years but opposition parties pounced on far less cheerful assessments of the situation from two leading authorities: Canada's top soldier and the head of NATO.

Gen. Rick Hillier declared it will probably take "10 years or so" for the Afghan army to meet its security demands – and NATO's secretary-general suggested it could take far longer than that.

Opposition MPs said Prime Minister Stephen Harper is ignoring his own military experts and allies because the truth makes him politically uncomfortable.

"I think General Hillier is telling the truth. And Stephen Harper is in politics," Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe said.

The head of NATO went even farther than Hillier, casting the Afghan struggle as a generational challenge.

"Development and nation-building is a matter of at least a generation, if not generations," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told the Globe and Mail.

"My analysis is that NATO will have to be present in Afghanistan in the military sense for the foreseeable future."

When asked about the apparent discrepancy, the government simply replied that it has hired a commission to spend the next several months examining Canada's options.

That commission was struck when it still seemed possible that the government might collapse on its throne speech and face an election with Afghanistan as a central issue.

The government survived when the Liberals abstained from voting on the Tory policy blueprint.

On Afghanistan, the throne speech said Canadian troops should remain deployed for four more years – and then, by 2011, Afghan forces should be able to defend their sovereignty.

"This is a very serious matter and I think the Prime Minister needs to respond," NDP Leader Jack Layton said

Tories charged with lying about mission; Opposition parties press government on timetable for making Afghanistan a stable nation

afterwards.

"We got glib responses . . . This is an enormous discrepancy and it does come down to who's telling the truth about this war."

Afghan MP to address anti-war demonstrators

IDNUMBER 200710260069
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Capital & Van. Isl.
PAGE: C3
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 121

Afghan MP and women's rights activist Malalai Joya, who is demanding Canadian troops pull out of the NATO-led Afghanistan mission, will speak at a Victoria demonstration marking Pan-Canadian Day of Action Against War on Sunday.

Joya was suspended from the Afghan parliament earlier this year for criticizing what she said is the prominent role of warlords in Afghanistan's government.

Canada has about 2,300 troops in Afghanistan. The debate in the House of Commons continues about whether the government should extend the combat mission in Afghanistan beyond 2009, and whether the focus should shift more to aid and development.

Joya is scheduled to speak at 12:30 p.m. at the cenotaph on the lawn of the B.C. legislature with a march to follow at 1 p.m.

Information on the Canada Out of Afghanistan Campaign can be found at: outofafghanistan@yahoo.ca.

Allies must step up in Afghanistan: Hillier

IDNUMBER 200710260028
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Chief of Defence StaffGen. Rick Hillier listens to Canadian troops at Ma'sum Ghar camp in Kandahar province yesterday. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 78

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Canada's chief of the defence staff left Afghanistan yesterday calling for more helicopters and military help from NATO members reluctant to work in the country's troubled southern provinces.

Gen. Rick Hillier said he would like to see more international ground troops in southern Afghanistan to speed up progress.

The U.S., British, Dutch and Canadian military are carrying the lion's share of the fighting in the most dangerous parts of the country. Canada has 2,500 troops in Afghanistan.

Slain soldier's family looks to court martial for answers

IDNUMBER 200710260019
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Kevin Megeney: Shot while in his tent on base;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 251

OTTAWA — The mother of a Canadian who was shot dead in Afghanistan says the trial of the soldier charged with killing him will ease some of the pain of the loss.

Karen Megeney says she still doesn't know how or why her son, Cpl. Ronald Kevin Megeney, died on March 6, 2007. But the court martial of the man accused in his death — another Canadian soldier, Cpl. Matthew Wilcox — will answer some of those questions.

"It's not that we wanted to see charges laid," said Megeney, of Stellarton, 150 kilometres north of Halifax.

"I mean, we don't know what happened. We have no idea what took place or why our son is gone. So if they think charges had to be laid ... they did the investigation. They would know better."

Megeney, 25, a reservist with the Nova Scotia Highlanders, based in New Glasgow, N.S., was shot in the chest in a tent on the Kandahar airfield. He was rushed to the hospital on the base but died within an hour of admission.

Wilcox, a reserve soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., faces one charge each of manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

The Canadian Forces said in a release yesterday that "based on all evidence collected, ballistic and forensic analysis completed by the [Canadian Forces National Investigation Service], Cpl. Megeney was killed by gunfire originating from a weapon allegedly held by Cpl. Wilcox."

Soldiers are required to carry a weapon with them at all times on the base, but accidental discharges are rare. Unless specifically ordered otherwise, Canadian soldiers must make sure their rifles and sidearms are unloaded and the ammunition carried separately.

Selling an unpopular war

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BYLINE: Jordan Thornton
SOURCE: The Leader-Post
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It's interesting that the country's pro-war politicians and pundits consider the results of a questionable opinion poll of fewer than 1,500 Afghans reason to suggest that we extend "the mission" in Afghanistan, while the fact that a strong majority of Canadians continues to oppose our presence in the country seems inconsequential to them.

Interestingly, the poll cited actually found that only a minority wants foreign troops to remain in their country, but the way much of the media framed its coverage, you would never guess this. It should be noted that this poll follows closely on the heels of a Strategic Council report that suggested the Harper regime better hone the propaganda it uses to convince Canadians they're wrong on the war.

The whole thing smacks of a government grasping at straws in the face of overwhelming opposition, and an inability to make a convincing case to Canadians through honest debate.

Regardless of how it is dressed up, this remains a war to prop up a brutal, corrupt puppet regime, which routinely tortures and murders its opponents, all so western corporations can gain access to this vital energy corridor, and provide the Americans with a forward operating base for current covert operations into, and future planned aggression against, Iran and Syria.

Perhaps if these politicians and pundits feel that the mission is so righteous, they should turn off their computers, grab a rifle and a helmet, and go put their lives at risk for it, rather than demanding that young Canadians continue to do it for them.

Jordan Thornton

Regina

Family seeks answers from court martial

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BYLINE: Ken Meaney and Meagan Fitzpatrick
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
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OTTAWA — The mother of a Canadian who was shot dead in Afghanistan says the trial of the soldier charged with killing him will ease some of the pain of the loss.

Karen Megeney says she still doesn't know how or why her son, Cpl. Ronald Kevin Megeney, died on March 6, 2007. But the court martial of the man accused in his death — another Canadian soldier, Cpl. Matthew Wilcox — will answer some of those questions.

"It's not that we wanted to see charges laid," said Megeney, of Stellarton, 150 kilometres north of Halifax.

"I mean, we don't know what happened. We have no idea what took place or why our son is gone. So if they think charges had to be laid ... they did the investigation. They would know better."

Megeney, 25, a reservist with the Nova Scotia Highlanders, based in New Glasgow, N.S., was shot in the chest in a tent on the Kandahar airfield. He was rushed to the hospital on the base but died within an hour of admission.

Wilcox, a reserve soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., faces one charge each of manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

The Canadian Forces said in a release Thursday that "based on all evidence collected, ballistic and forensic analysis completed by the CFNIS (Canadian Forces National Investigation Service), Cpl. Megeney was killed by gunfire originating from a weapon allegedly held by Cpl. Wilcox."

Karen Megeney said Canadian military investigators informed them of the charges in person.

"The investigators came to the house to tell us that charges had been laid against the young fellow," she said.

She said the military hasn't told them anything about what happened to their son, and they don't expect them to.

Megeney said the trial is still months away, but when it starts she will be there every day.

"I don't know if it'll bring closure. Certainly, it'll help a lot to answer some questions. And we can put that behind us, because we'll know why and what happened," she said.

Megeney's son was friends with Wilcox, and Megeney said she feels for what they are going through, too.

"Oh, my heart goes out to them. I feel really bad," she said. "They're hurting, too. That's their boy. ... He's got to live with that, too. I feel bad for them all."

Wilcox is not the only Canadian soldier currently facing charges related to the death of a fellow soldier in Afghanistan.

In March, Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser was charged with one count of manslaughter and one count of negligent performance of duty in connection with the death of Master Cpl. Jeffrey Scott Walsh. Earlier this month, the Canadian Forces confirmed that those charges will proceed to a court martial.

Tories accused of lying about time needed to stabilize Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 479

OTTAWA _ The Conservative government was accused Thursday of painting a misleadingly rosy portrait of the situation in Afghanistan that contradicts the view of its own military experts.

The Tories say Afghanistan should be stable enough to handle its own security by 2011 _ a view reiterated late Thursday by a spokeswoman for Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

But opposition parties pounced on far less cheerful assessments of the situation from two leading authorities: Canada's top soldier and the head of NATO.

Gen. Rick Hillier declared it will probably take ``10 years or so" for the Afghan army to meet its security demands _ and NATO's secretary-general suggested it could take far longer than that.

The opposition accused Harper of ignoring his own military experts and allies because the truth makes him politically uncomfortable.

``I think General Hillier is telling the truth. And Stephen Harper is in politics," Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe said.

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said: ``Mr. Hillier is the expert and he knows better. Someone lied there."

The head of NATO went even farther than Hillier, casting the Afghan struggle as a generational challenge.

``Development and nation-building is a matter of at least a generation, if not generations," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told the Globe and Mail.

``My analysis is that NATO will have to be present in Afghanistan in the military sense for the foreseeable future."

When asked about the apparent discrepancy, the government initially dodged by pointing to a commission it's hired to examine Canada's options.

Skeptics have warned that the commission, whose recommendations are non-binding, will serve only one purpose: helping the government avoid questions on Afghanistan for a few months.

On Thursday, that warning appeared prophetic.

``This government has established an independent commission to study the issue and provide advice to this government," Tory House leader Peter Van Loan replied when pressed on the matter.

``It's headed up by the former deputy prime minister John Manley. We anticipate a report to this House which will give the House an opportunity to vote on the best course forward."

That commission was struck when it still seemed possible that the government might collapse on its throne speech and face an election with Afghanistan as a central issue.

The government survived when the Liberals abstained from voting on the Tory policy blueprint.

On Afghanistan, the throne speech said Canadian troops should remain deployed for four more years _ and then, by 2011, Afghan forces should be able to defend their own sovereignty.

A spokeswoman for Harper noted that the final decision on an Afghan extension will happen in a vote in Parliament _ which is a promise the prime minister has made repeatedly.

She also reiterated the government's view that Afghanistan could be stabilized within four years.

``Building up the capacity of the Afghan people so that they can defend their own sovereignty has always been our goal and we know this will not happen overnight," said Harper's communications director, Sandra Buckler.

``However, our Government believes that this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The Liberals did not question the government on the apparent discrepancy during Thursday's question period _ choosing instead to spend the entire session asking about government scandals.

But the NDP wanted to know whether Hillier or Harper was telling the truth.

``This is a very serious matter and I think the Prime Minister needs to respond," NDP Leader Jack Layton said afterwards.

``We got glib responses . . . This is an enormous discrepancy and it does come down to who's telling the truth about this war."

DATE: 2007.10.25

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 230

^Soldier Charged in Death of Corporal Kevin Megeney@<

October 25, 2007

OTTAWA, ONTARIO--(Marketwire – Oct. 25, 2007) – The Canadian Forces National Investigation Service (CFNIS) has charged a reserve soldier from Glace Bay, N.S. today, in relation to the shooting death of Corporal Ronald Kevin Megeney, in Afghanistan.

Corporal Matthew Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion, Nova Scotia Highlanders, was charged with one count of Manslaughter, contrary to Section 130 of the National Defence Act, pursuant to Section 236(a) of the Criminal Code, one count of Criminal Negligence Causing Death, contrary to Section 130 of the National Defence Act, pursuant to Section 220(a) of the Criminal Code and one count of Negligent Performance of Duty, contrary to Section 124 of the National Defence Act.

Cpl Megeney was killed on March 6, 2007 in the Canadian tent lines at Kandahar Airfield. Based on all evidence collected, ballistic and forensic analysis completed by the CFNIS, Cpl Megeney was killed by gun fire originating from a weapon allegedly held by Cpl Wilcox.

The CFNIS is an independent Military Police unit with a mandate to investigate serious and sensitive matters in relation to National Defence property, DND employees and CF personnel serving in Canada and abroad.

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INDUSTRY: Government – International, Government – Local,

Government – National, Government – Security (law enforcement,

homeland etc), Government – State

SUBJECT: LAW

Afghan military needs 10 years before it's ready to go it alone: Hillier

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 635

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, says Canada's top soldier.

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation Thursday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check, thus allowing Canadian troops to go home.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion _ 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

After years of work and training, there are about two battalions of Afghan soldiers in Kandahar province. Overall, there's a total of about 38,000 Afghan troops in the country. It may sound good on paper but the number is only about half of what is needed for Afghanistan to provide its own security.

"An army is what's required to allow them to keep their security, so that's a long term project," Hillier said.

"It's going to take 10 years or so just to work through and build an army to whatever the final number that Afghanistan will have, and make them professional and let them meet their security demands here."

Hillier's remarks echo those from other NATO leaders who have said Afghanistan will have to be a longterm commitment for members of the alliance.

Canada has about 2,500 troops serving with NATO's International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF. Its mission is to help the Kabul government assert its authority across the fractured country and overcome the security challenges posed by Taliban insurgents, rival warlords and narcotics kingpins.

Most of the Canadians are in Kandahar province, a Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan where some of the the bloodiest fighting has taken place.

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 when the current mandate of the Afghan mission expires in February 2009 _ or even earlier.

“Canada will decide whatever role it's going to play,” Hillier said. “The panel is in place and the government will make its decisions.”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed a five-person panel, headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, to make recommendations on the future of the mission. The range of options includes the continued training of the Afghan army and police, and withdrawing altogether.

But the Harper government's throne speech indicates it wants Canada's direct involvement in Afghanistan to continue until 2011.

In the short-term, Hillier is hoping to get additional support from other NATO allies in terms of helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles and more troops.

“What would be best here would be another manoeuvre battalion group to give us the flexibility to be able to ... keep a footprint in an area where we've been until the Afghan police and army can take that area over by themselves,” Hillier said.

“That will allow us to manoeuvre off to other areas where the Taliban are slightly stronger, and put them on the back foot in those other areas.”

“With just the one battle group here, even with the Afghan National Army forces and the police we are now getting here, we still do not have all the capabilities that we have to do.”

Cdn soldier charged with manslaughter in death of colleague in Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE JUSTICE
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 708

HALIFAX _ The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said Thursday she feels ``very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

``We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. ``They're going through a hard time too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home Thursday morning, said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

``I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

``Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said in an interview from Ottawa.

``The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

Garrick said he couldn't release any details of what is alleged to have happened in the incident since the case could go before a court martial in the coming months.

Family members have said they're eager for the process to move forward since they still have little insight into what occurred to Megeney, a 25-year-old reservist who was a friend of Wilcox.

``We're just looking at it as another step to finding out the truth," Megeney said from the home where the red-headed soldier was raised. ``We don't know anything about what happened that day."

The two soldiers were said to be good friends when they deployed together from their base in central Nova Scotia in December and shared a tent, where Garrick said they were prohibited from carrying loaded weapons.

Megeney's father, Dexter Megeney, said he wants the case to proceed but isn't seeking revenge for the death of his son, who became the 45th Canadian soldier to die there since the Canadian mission began in 2002. Seventy soldiers and one diplomat have died on the mission to date.

“We're letting them do their job,” he said of the military prosecutors. “We're not out for blood or anything.”

At the time of the incident, the Megeneys received a call from one of their son's friends telling them he had been shot in the chest in what appeared to be a case of friendly fire. Megeney was rushed to the hospital, but died in the operating room.

The decision to lay the charges comes just weeks after the military ordered another Canadian soldier to go before a court martial for similar offences.

Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser will face a military trial on charges of manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in the death of Master Cpl. Jeff Walsh, 33, in Afghanistan on Aug. 9, 2006.

Fraser was originally charged in March. Under military law, several subsequent stages had to be completed before a decision was made on whether to go ahead with a military trial.

Military prosecutors consider two main issues when deciding whether to prosecute a charge at court martial — whether the evidence is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction and whether the public interest requires a prosecution be pursued, a military spokesman said.

Family members say they were told that Walsh was seated beside the driver of a cramped G-wagon armoured vehicle during a patrol near Kandahar when another soldier's gun discharged inside the vehicle.

It wasn't immediately known how many soldiers have been convicted of negligence in accidental discharges of their weapons since Canada first sent regular troops to Afghanistan early in 2002.

Some have been fined, others have been sentenced to labour, and a few have received both penalties, usually meted out during summary trials in theatre.

Garrick said cases of this nature are rare.

“By and large, the soldiers we have are very well trained and very well skilled and these types of incidents are rare for us,” he said.

The Canadian military follows the civilian Criminal Code in defining manslaughter as “culpable homicide” that falls short of murder.

Negligent performance of duty is a violation of the National Defence Act with a maximum penalty of disgraceful dismissal from the Canadian Forces.

NATO wants to publicize Taliban outrages; gets Danish funding for video gear

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS MEDIA

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 565

NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands _ When NATO put out a call for more equipment in southern Afghanistan, it was expecting guns and helicopters _ not cameras and video-cataloguing gear.

But that's what it got from Denmark: an offer of 1 million euros, or about C\$1.4 million, to buy video equipment that will ultimately be used to deliver documented Taliban outrages to a television near you _ or to the popular video website YouTube.

At the end of a two-day informal meeting of defence ministers in the Netherlands, NATO's secretary general reiterated Thursday that the alliance needs to do a better job in public relations both in home countries and Afghanistan.

``What we can do is improve our public messaging," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told reporters.

``Part of that public messaging could be to show to the people _ and they can draw their own conclusions _ what our opponent, our enemy in Afghanistan, looks like; what they do."

He accused the Taliban of performing ``the most horrendous human rights violations."

Two weeks ago, de Hoop Scheffer made a pitch to declassify video surveillance footage shot by NATO forces throughout the Afghan conflict. Allied countries have a variety of electronic intelligence-gathering means at their disposal.

The Danes responded with an initiative to provide equipment to transfer and catalogue existing video taken by the various countries involved in fighting the insurgency war. There will also be cameras so that more video can be shot.

The alliance, for all its high-tech hardware and gizmos, does not have such a facility right now, said Canadian Col. Brett Boudreau, a spokesman for Gen. Ray Henault, head of NATO's military council.

Faced with sagging support in countries like Canada and the Netherlands for the Afghan mission, NATO sees the videos as a way of shoring up public opinion.

But one man's YouTube video could be another man's propaganda. De Hoop Scheffer bristled at such a suggestion in questions from a Danish journalist.

``Citizens in Denmark or elsewhere are usually well informed, adult people," the secretary general said.

He said he doesn't think any Danish, Dutch or Norwegian citizen ``will be in a position to have himself or herself cheated by NATO propaganda."

``That is definitely not what NATO would do. It is definitely not something I would authorize in any way."

Any declassified footage released by NATO will be ``unmanipulated," the secretary general insisted.

In addition, it's been suggested that a special communications team will be assembled to rapidly react to insurgent claims.

Convincing member countries to share intelligence on Taliban activities is going to be a challenge, Boudreau conceded.

NATO apparently possesses a trove of classified, clandestine footage.

One video, which de Hoop Scheffer said was shown to commanders recently, depicts an insurgent who pulled a burka from a backpack and draped himself in the head-to-foot robe to take on the appearance of a woman. He then opened fire with an AK-47 on western troops.

Despite talking up the compelling footage, NATO has yet to make it public.

Public debate over civilian casualties in Afghanistan has been limited almost exclusively to criticism of NATO for misdirected air strikes and inadvertant shootings by western troops.

The Taliban has been quick to exploit the resentment of Afghans over civilian casualties while portraying carnage caused by insurgent tactics as justified.

Unlike al-Qaida, which has a sophisticated production company posting hard-line Islamist messages on the Internet, the Taliban are relative newcomers. Last winter, in conjunction with Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, the Taliban released footage of what it claimed was a successful attack on a U.S. position in southern Afghanistan.

Videos of Taliban suicide bombers alledgedly being dispatched to western countries received breathless coverage last spring from North American and some European media.

Insurgents in Iraq have long used videos of roadside bombings as a propaganda and recruiting tool.

De Hoop Scheffer noted that the western media are quick to pick up on Taliban claims and the occasional video, but by the time NATO responds, the news cycle has usually moved on.

Tories accused of lying about time needed to stabilize Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 922

OTTAWA _ The Conservative government was accused Thursday of painting a misleadingly rosy portrait of the situation in Afghanistan _ but it refused to discuss the charge.

The Tories have maintained Afghanistan can be stabilized in four years but opposition parties pounced on far less cheerful assessments of the situation from two leading authorities: Canada's top soldier and the head of NATO.

Gen. Rick Hillier declared it will probably take ``10 years or so" for the Afghan army to meet its security demands _ and NATO's secretary-general suggested it could take far longer than that.

Opposition MPs said Prime Minister Stephen Harper is ignoring his own military experts and allies because the truth makes him politically uncomfortable.

``I think General Hillier is telling the truth. And Stephen Harper is in politics," Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe said.

The head of NATO went even farther than Hillier, casting the Afghan struggle as a generational challenge.

``Development and nation-building is a matter of at least a generation, if not generations," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told the Globe and Mail.

``My analysis is that NATO will have to be present in Afghanistan in the military sense for the foreseeable future."

Supreme Court to hear Crown appeal in Omar Khadr terror case.

OTTAWA _ The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a Crown appeal over whether Omar Khadr, a Canadian terror suspect held in Guantanamo prison by the United States, is entitled to see government documents tied to his case.

Lawyers for Khadr want the Canadian government to turn over any materials it has that might be relevant. The Justice Department wants the documents kept secret.

The Toronto-born Khadr was taken prisoner by American soldiers in Afghanistan in 2002, when he was 15. He was sent to a U.S. military detention facility in Guantanamo, Cuba.

Canadian officials interviewed Khadr in Guantanamo and later gave summaries of the interviews to American officials.

In 2005, the Americans laid terrorism-related charges against Khadr, although they were withdrawn last June because of problems with terminology. He remains in custody in Guantanamo.

Khadr's lawyers tried unsuccessfully to obtain copies of the Canadian materials and went to Federal Court to back their demands.

That court rejected their claim, but the Federal Court of Appeal overturned the decision and ordered the lower court to determine which documents should be released.

The Crown appealed and the Supreme Court agreed Thursday to hear the case.

Bayer stops Canadian-led drug trial over concerns of increased death rates

TORONTO _ Drug giant Bayer Inc. confirmed Thursday that a large Canadian-led trial studying its drug Trasylol (aprotinin) has been halted because of concerns the drug increased the risk of death among people who received it.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration also posted a statement on the observed risk from the study, known as the BART trial, saying the agency will consider the new evidence as part of its ongoing deliberations on whether the drug should be removed from the market or have additional warnings on its label.

The drug is used to prevent massive bleeding during coronary bypass surgery.

"In light of the preliminary BART study findings, FDA anticipates re-evaluation of the overall risks and benefits of Trasylol," the U.S. drug regulator said.

"This re-evaluation may result in the need to revise the labelling or other regulatory actions. Until this process has been completed, health-care providers who are considering use of Trasylol should be aware of the risks and benefits described in the labelling for Trasylol and the accumulating data suggesting Trasylol administration increases the risk for death compared to other antifibrinolytic drugs."

Bayer also issued new guidance to doctors, telling them they should only use Trasylol as directed on the drug's label while records of the multi-centre, multi-year trial are reviewed.

Defective rail caused CN train to derail, spill oil into Alberta lake

EDMONTON _ A derailment that spilled oil and chemicals into a popular Alberta lake two years ago was caused when a CN train broke an aging defective replacement rail, the Transportation Safety Board says.

The board's report into what happened at Lake Wabamun warns of future accidents unless Ottawa and the industry set minimum standards for the quality and strength of so-called maintenance rails and standards for when old rails should be replaced.

"Together the measures we are recommending will ensure that Canada's railways can always carry the load," Wendy Tadros, chairwoman of the safety board, said Thursday.

"Together they will prevent rail failures. They will decrease the number of derailments on Canadian railways."

Replacement rails are used by the industry across the country, Tadros said.

The report also reiterated a recommendation the board made in 1993 that the federal Transport Department reassess the procedures railways use to test track rails for defects.

The derailment on Aug. 3, 2005, dumped more than 700,000 litres of bunker C oil and chemicals onto the

shore of the lake west of Edmonton. People were forced to evacuate and hundreds of birds and fish were killed. Clean drinking water was trucked into the area until last March.

Cdn soldier charged with manslaughter in death of colleague in Afghanistan

HALIFAX _ The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said Thursday she feels ``very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

``We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. ``They're going through a hard time too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home Thursday morning, said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

``I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

13 suspected Taliban killed in Afghan clashes

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 206

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ U.S.-led coalition and Afghan troops attacked a gathering of Taliban militants in southern Afghanistan, leaving 10 insurgents dead and 14 wounded, an Afghan official said Thursday.

Four Afghan soldiers were also wounded in the attack Wednesday evening in the Daychopan district of Zabul province, said district chief Fazel Bari.

The operation was launched after intelligence reports indicated a Taliban gathering was taking place in the area, Bari said.

In Kandahar province, meanwhile, the Taliban ambushed a police vehicle in Zhari district Wednesday, killing four officers and wounding two others, said Niyaz Mohammad Sarhadi.

Taliban also clashed with Afghan National Army troops in Tagab Valley, in Kapisa province, leaving five soldiers and three militants dead Wednesday, the Defence Ministry said. Four militants were also wounded in the clash.

Also Wednesday, a car bomb exploded near a convoy carrying a provincial governor in eastern Afghanistan, injuring nine people.

Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said Arsallah Jamal, governor of Khost province, survived the blast in Khost city unhurt but five of his bodyguards and four civilians were wounded.

U.S. troops surrounded the area of Wednesday's blast and took the wounded to a hospital at their base near the city, said Gen. Mohammad Ayub, the provincial police chief.

It was at least the third attempt to kill Jamal, who was returning from a visit to districts near the border with Pakistan when he was targeted.

Afghan–Violence

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 134

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — An Afghan official says 10 Taliban are dead and 14 wounded after a joint attack by coalition and Afghan troops in the southern region of the country.

Four Afghan soldiers were also wounded in the attack staged last night in Zabul province.

District chief Fazel Bari says the operation was launched after intelligence reports indicated a Taliban gathering was taking place in the area.

Earlier yesterday, a car bomb exploded near a convoy carrying a provincial governor in eastern Afghanistan, leaving nine people wounded.

Afghanistan's Interior Ministry says the governor of Khost province was unhurt in the blast, but five of his bodyguards and four civilians were wounded.

U–S troops surrounded the area and took the wounded to a hospital at their base nearby.

It was at least the third attempt on the governor's life. He was returning from a visit to districts near the border with Pakistan when he was targeted.

(The Associated Press)

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DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 346

A day after U–S Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice admitted the Maher Arar case was mishandled, Ottawa has asked the White House to remove him from any no–fly lists.

Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day says he's made a formal request to U–S Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

Arar was detained in New York in 2002 and then sent to Syria, where he was tortured as a suspected terrorist.

While acknowledging American officials bungled the case yesterday, Rice did not apologize and suggested Arar would remain on U–S security watch lists. (14)

(Cda–Soldier–Charged) (Audio:188)

Following a lengthy military probe, a manslaughter charge has been laid against a Canadian soldier in the shooting death of a close friend and fellow soldier in Afghanistan.

Corporal Kevin Megeney of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia was killed on March 6th while in a tent on the Kandahar air field.

Corporal Matthew Wilcox, a reservist from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, has also been charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Military officials are releasing few details in the case. (14)

(Reducing–Salt)

Ottawa is taking action after leading health organizations warned that urgent action is needed to reduce sodium levels in the food we eat.

Health Minister Tony Clement says the government will form a working group to look into ways Canadians can reduce their salt intake.

High sodium intake contributes to high blood pressure, which in turn can lead to strokes and heart disease. (14)

(CRIME–NB–Child–Death)

A New Brunswick mother has been convicted of criminal negligence causing death for failing to recognize her daughter was in dire need of medical attention.

Anna Marie Mooers failed to take her two–year–old girl to hospital in 2004 despite her suffering from a perforated bowel.

His boyfriend was also charged but was acquitted.

The Crown argued a reasonable person would have been alert about the child's health in the days leading up to her death. (14)

(CRIME—Murder—Acquit)

A Montreal man has been acquitted of shooting an Ottawa—area man outside a north—end McDonald's restaurant last December.

The Crown had argued Daudi Niyonsaba — who survived — was shot because he was wearing red and was mistaken for wearing a local gang's colour.

Judge Claude Millette ruled there wasn't evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that Jean—Yves Brutus was responsible for the shooting. (14)

(Booze—Sales)

In the words of Tom T. Hall — “This little refrain should help me explain — as a matter of fact, I like beer.”

And beer is still Canada's favourite adult beverage, but we also like our red wine.

Statistics Canada says we bought 2.2 (b) billion litres of suds last year, compared to 378.7 (m) million litres of wine.

And red wines makes up 60 per cent of wine sales. (14)

(NewsWatch by Chris Mayberry)

INDEX:Defence, International, Politics, Social

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 119

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Canada's top military commander has left Afghanistan with a warning that it could take several years before the embattled country is able to fend for itself.

General Rick Hillier told reporters that although there is progress being made – Afghanistan is only about half way to the 70–thousand soldiers it needs in its army to keep the peace in its country.

He said it could take 10 years.

Hillier says Canadians don't always see all the complexities involved in rebuilding a country.

He said `25 years of destruction' has taken its toll.

The chief of defence staff is hoping other NATO countries will step up to the table because another full battallion of ground troops is necessary to maintain the foothold already gained and to move ahead in the future.

(The Canadian Press)

INDEX:Defence, International, Politics, Media

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS MEDIA

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 113

NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands – When NATO put out a call for more equipment in southern Afghanistan, it was expecting guns and helicopters – not cameras and video cataloguing gear.

But that's exactly what it got from Denmark.

It's an offer of about C\$1.4 million worth of video gear that will ultimately be used to document and deliver images of Taliban outrages to a television near you – or to the popular website, U-Tube.

At the end of a two-day informal meeting of defence ministers in the Netherlands, NATO's secretary general says that the alliance needs to do a better job in public diplomacy.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer says a way to do this is to show the public images of what 'our enemy in Afghanistan looks like.'

He accuses the Taliban of the 'most horrendous' human rights violations.

(The Canadian Press)

TOR OUT YYY

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 320

A bold warning from Canada's top military man.

Defence—staff chief General Rick Hillier has left Afghanistan with a warning that it could take several years before the embattled country is able to fend for itself.

Hillier told reporters that although there is progress being made, Afghanistan is only about half—way to the 70—thousand soldiers it needs in its army to keep the peace there.

He said it could take 10 years, noting ``25 years of destruction" has taken its toll.

Hillier is hoping other NATO countries will step up to the plate to help. (4)

(Afghan—Cda—NATO)

The Afghan mission is still high on the agenda at the NATO defence ministers' meeting in the Netherlands.

Defence Minister Peter MacKay is pressing his NATO allies to play a bigger role in the fight against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan.

He says there's a need for more soldiers and equipment to fill gaps in the battlefield, and more military personnel to train the fledgling Afghan army. (4)

(Throne Speech—Vote)

Liberal M—P's held their noses through one of the most crucial tests of the Harper minority Parliament and abstained from a vote on the Conservative throne speech.

They wanted to avoid forcing an election.

And there won't be one — the vote passed 126—to—79.

But afterwards, Tory M—P Pierre Poilievre chided the Liberals, repeating over and over that Leader Stephane Dion is weak. (4)

(Calif—Wildfires) (Audio: 57)

U—S President Bush will see the devastation in southern California first—hand today.

He'll take a helicopter tour of the burned out areas.

Wildfires have destroyed about 15—hundred homes since Sunday, and have displaced half a (m) million people in the largest evacuation in California history. (4)

(911–Slow–Response)

A Winnipeg woman is miffed that it took police 19 hours before they showed up to investigate her 9–1–1 call about catching burglars in the act of ransacking her house.

Joanne Martin tells Global T–V she went out for a couple of hours and returned home just after 4 p–m to find a van parked in her driveway and three thieves loading up her stuff.

Insurance agents showed up an hour after her call, but police didn't arrive until the next day.

A city official admits something went wrong with ``call prioritization." (4)

(Execution–Stayed)

A terminally ill death row inmate in Alabama gets to live.

Due to be executed today for strangling two women and two boys 21 years ago, Daniel Siebert has been granted a stay of execution by a U–S federal appeals court.

The man is dying of pancreatic cancer.

He successfully argued the medication he takes for cancer would counteract with the lethal–injection drugs and inflict unnecessary pain. (4)

(NewsWatch by Karen Rebot)

Update:Recasts with details of sanctions, new headline

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE FINANCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 138

WASHINGTON – The U.S. administration is imposing sweeping new sanctions against Iran's defence ministry, its Revolutionary Guard Corps and a number of banks.

U.S. officials say the sanctions are aimed at punish the Iranians for their alleged support for terrorist organizations in Iraq and the Middle East, as well as for missile sales and nuclear activities.

The officials disclosed the nature of the sanctions ahead of the formal announcement later today by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson.

They say the sanctions will cover some of the Iranian government's largest military and financial institutions.

Washington blames them for supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan, Shia insurgent groups in Iraq, along with the Hamas and Hezbollah organizations.

The officials say the U.S. government will designate Iran's defence ministry and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile technology.

(The Associated Press)

Cda–Soldier–Charged–Update (Victim's mother's comments)

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 120

HALIFAX — The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot and killed by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan says she feels “very bad” for the young man who was charged with manslaughter by the military.

Karen Megeney says she feels for Matthew Wilcox, who could face life in prison if convicted of manslaughter.

The 22-year-old corporal from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia has been also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

He was alone last March in a tent with Corporal Kevin Megeney of Stellarton when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Megeney has been briefed on the charges by military officials and says she is sure it was an accident.

The commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggests much the same.

The two soldiers were good friends.

(The Canadian Press)

RPW

TOR OUT YYY

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 317

The Harper government's throne speech has passed its final hurdle in the House of Commons, thanks to the Liberals.

The Liberals criticized the Conservatives' speech, but weren't prepared to go to the polls over it — so they abstained from last night's vote.

The confidence motion therefore passed 126–79.

The speech promises tax cuts and efforts to bolster Arctic sovereignty, while also urging an extension of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan to 2011. (2)

(Cda–Afghan–NATO) (Audio: 02)

Canada is pressing its NATO allies to play a bigger role in the fight against terrorism in southern Afghanistan.

The call came from Defence Minister Peter MacKay, who is meeting with his NATO counterparts in the Netherlands.

MacKay says there's a need for more soldiers, equipment and military trainers in the battle against Taliban insurgents.

Sources say Canada is not looking for a country to replace our soldiers on the front lines, but rather to fill gaps in the battlefield and to help quickly train the Afghan army. (2)

(US–Cda–Arar)

Prime Minister Harper says the U–S has made a step in the right direction by admitting it mishandled the case of Maher Arar.

He's the Syrian–born Canadian engineer who was deported by the U–S to Syria where he was tortured.

A Canadian judicial inquiry later found no evidence of any terrorist links.

U–S Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice publicly admitted yesterday that the U–S mishandled Arar's case, but stopped short of an apology. (2)

(Calif–Wildfires)

F–B–I teams are helping local authorities in southern California, trying to determine if any of the large wildfires burning are the work of arsonists.

At least two of the fires have been linked to arson.

Winds have eased off, giving firefighters a chance to gain ground on blazes that have done at least a (b) billion dollars damage in San Diego County alone.

More than 15–hundred homes have been destroyed. (2)

(Indonesia–Quake/Volcano)

Mother Nature is doing a number on Indonesia today.

Residents in western Indonesia, still jittery after a killer earthquake last month, have been rocked again.

A magnitude–7.1 quake hit before dawn, jolting people from their beds.

And a volcano has erupted in central Indonesia.

But there has been no report of any injuries. (2)

(ENT–Collins–Arrest)

T–V talk–show host and actor Gary Collins has been arrested in Los Angeles, for misdemeanor driving under the influence following a traffic accident.

But police are blaming the accident on another driver, an 89–year–old man, who allegedly didn't yield to oncoming traffic and collided with Collins' car.

However, officers smelled alcohol on Collins' breath and gave him a field sobriety test, which the 69–year–old actor allegedly failed. (2)

(NewsWatch by Karen Rebot)

INDEX:Advisories

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 299

(Cda–Soldier–Charged)

The Canadian military has charged a young reservist from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, with manslaughter after the fatal shooting of a soldier last March in Afghanistan.

Twenty–two–year–old Corporal Matthew Wilcox faces a number charges in the shooting death of Corporal Kevin Megeney at the Kandahar airbase.

Twenty–five–year–old Megeney was from Stellarton, Nova Scotia.

Investigators say Wilcox and Megeney were the only ones in the tent when the shooting occurred, but they're not releasing any other details. (The Canadian Press)

(NL–Spending–Scandal)

Another charge has been laid against a former Newfoundland and Labrador natural resources minister implicated in a government spending scandal.

Ed Byrne was already charged with fraud over five–thousand dollars, breach of trust by a public officer, and uttering a forged document.

Now he's been charged with frauds on government.

Byrne was represented by his lawyer during a court appearance today in St. John's. (St. John's Telegram)

(NB–Child–Death)

A New Brunswick woman charged with criminal negligence in the death of her young daughter has been found guilty.

Twenty–seven–year–old Anna Marie Mooers of Canterbury will be sentenced on November 29th.

She was accused of failing to recognize her two–year–old daughter was in dire need of medical attention on April 13th, 2004.

Mooers's ex–boyfriend, Curtis Brent Hathaway, has been found not guilty of the same charge. (The Canadian Press)

(EnCana–Panuke)

The Offshore–Onshore Technologies Association of Nova Scotia is praising EnCana's decision to move forward with Deep Panuke.

Association chair Barry Clouter says the natural gas project off Nova Scotia will help attract more investment in the industry.

Production is expected to begin in 2010.

(The Canadian Press)

(Police–Chase)

A Halifax man faces 13 charges, including flight from police and dangerous driving, after a wild chase with police.

The chase began last night after police approached a man in a car.

Police say they fired shots at the car, striking the man in the leg, after he tried to hit the officers with his vehicle.

Twenty-one-year-old Jason Kyle DeYoung will remain in custody until a court appearance Monday. (The Canadian Press)

(Lt–Gov–House)

There's still plenty of work to be done on the lieutenant–governor's official residence in Halifax.

Reporters were taken on a tour of Government House today.

Renovations at the mansion were expected to wrap up next year — now Mayann Francis won't be able to move in until December 2009.

The cost of the work has also increased by more than 2 (m) million dollars, up to 5.7 (m) million.

But project manager Ron Jeppesen says the cost isn't expected to go past that mark. (The Canadian Press)

(Atlantic Update by Melanie Patten)

TOR OUT YYY

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 324

There won't be a federal election over the Harper government's throne speech.

The Liberals ensured its passage by abstaining from the final vote on the speech last night in the House of Commons.

As Liberal M-P's held their noses and squirmed in their seats, New Democrats and Bloc M-P's voted against the Conservatives' latest legislative agenda.

The Liberals have criticized the speech, but weren't prepared to trigger an election over it — so the confidence motion passed 126 to 79.

The speech promises tax cuts, but also urges an extension of the Afghanistan mission. (3)

(GST–Cut–Liberals) (Audio: 54)

If the Harper government comes through with a promise to cut the G–S–T to five per cent, the Liberals won't stand in the way.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion vows his party will swallow hard and — like the throne speech — won't bring down the minority Conservative government over it.

Dion's comments come amid growing speculation that Finance Minister Jim Flaherty will include an early G–S–T cut in his fall economic update in a couple of weeks.

The Liberals say such a tax reduction is bad for the economy. (3)

(Prison–Death)

Charges have been laid against two correctional officers at a women's prison in Kitchener, Ontario, in the death of a 19-year-old inmate from New Brunswick.

Ashley Smith was found dead in her cell Friday at Grand Valley Institution for Women — a victim of apparent suicide.

But police say “pieces of evidence” have since turned up, turning their investigation into a criminal one.

Two male correctional officers are now charged with criminal negligence causing death. (3)

(Calif–Wildfires)

One man has been booked for investigation of arson after allegedly setting a small fire in southern California.

Police don't know if he's connected to any of the large wildfires burning in the state.

And police fatally shot a man who fled Tuesday night when officers approached to see if he might be trying to set a fire.

U-S President Bush will visit the area today for an aerial tour of the devastation. (3)

(Shuttle)

The space shuttle Discovery docks with the international space station this morning for a visit scheduled to last about a week and a half.

NASA says it's found no launch damage on the shuttle so far.

But the space station's three-person crew will snap digital photos as Discovery does a slow motion backflip on its final approach. (3)

(Historic-Flight)

The world's largest jetliner has touched down in Australia this morning to complete its first commercial flight.

There were 455 passengers aboard the Singapore Airlines A-380 that made the seven and a-half hour trip from Singapore to Sydney.

Travellers sipped Dom Perignon and ate lobster during the flight. (3)

(NewsWatch by Karen Rebot)

Cda–Afghan–NATO

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 102

NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands — Canada is pressing its NATO allies to play a bigger role in the fight in southern Afghanistan.

The call came from Defence Minister Peter MacKay, who is meeting with his NATO counterparts near Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

MacKay says there's a need for more soldiers, equipment, and military trainers in the battle against Taliban insurgents.

He will press that point again today when he meets with Germany's defence minister.

Sources say Canada is not looking for a country to replace Canadian soldiers on the front lines.

Instead, Canada is looking to fill gaps in the battlefield, and to quickly train the fledgling Afghan army.

Because Canadian soldiers don't have helicopters in Afghanistan, Canada is worried that allies with C–H–47 Chinooks in Afghanistan are thinking about withdrawing those aircraft.

(The Canadian Press)

wfm

TOR OUT YYY

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 331

Washington is being asked to remove torture victim Maher Arar from any lists that would prevent him from flying in the United States.

The request comes from Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day, who contacted U-S Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

Despite admitting officials botched the case when they suspected Arar of terrorism, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice suggested he would remain on U-S security watch lists. (15)

(Cda-Soldier-Charged)

Corporal Kevin Megeney's mother says she feels ``very bad" for a fellow Nova Scotia corporal who has been charged with manslaughter in her son's death in Afghanistan.

Corporal Matthew Wilcox was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty following an extensive military investigation.

Wilcox was alone in a tent with Megeney on March 6th when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's handgun.

Karen Megeney says she is ``sure it was an accident." (15)

(Prison-Problems)

Canada's prison system is in dire need of federal cash to address problems, according to corrections ombudsman Howard Sapers.

His report says the problems are increasing despair and violence among inmates and hiking their risk of reoffending once released.

In particular, he says, too many offenders are spending time in prison without getting the programs they need to reintegrate into society. (15)

(Flu-Shot-Mismatch)

Despite word that the flu vaccine may not be as effective as hoped, doctors still recommend that Canadians get their shots.

Because of mismatches between the strains it contains and those actually circulating, this year's flu vaccine may offer only 40 to 50 per cent protection.

But public health experts insist that some protection is better than none, especially for the elderly. (15)

(Harper-Campaign)

A fall election was averted when the Throne Speech was passed this week, but that hasn't stopped Prime Minister Harper from campaigning.

He was in northern Ontario today, announcing a huge marine conservation area that will cover 10-thousand square kilometres of Lake Superior's water and shoreline.

The project was started by former Liberal prime minister Jean Chretien and Harper credited local M-P Joe Comuzzi – a former Liberal who crossed the floor to join the Tories. (15)

(Neanderthal-Redheads)

So, what did Neanderthals look like?

Would you believe fair skin and red hair?

The online issue of the journal Science says researchers studying the D-N-A of Neanderthals have found a mutation in two individuals that can affect skin and hair pigmentation.

The team says that in modern humans, when a slightly different mutation reduces the function of that gene, the result is red hair and fair skin. (15)

(NewsWatch by Chris Mayberry)

Throne–Speech–Vote

DATE: 2007.10.25

KEYWORDS: POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 103

OTTAWA -- There won't be an election over the federal government's throne speech.

The Liberals ensured its passage by abstaining from the final vote on the speech last night in the House of Commons.

As Liberal M–Ps held their noses and squirmed in their seats, the N–D–P and Bloc Quebecois voted against the Conservative blueprint for governing.

The Liberals criticized the speech but weren't prepared to go to the polls over it, so the confidence motion passed, 126 to 79.

The speech promises tax cuts and efforts to bolster Arctic sovereignty.

But it also urges an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan to 2011 from the current date of February 2009.

And it declares the government won't meet its obligations under the Kyoto climate change treaty.

The Liberals tried to amend the speech, but their motion was voted down Monday.

(The Canadian Press)

TAP

INDEX:Defence, Justice

DATE: 2007.10.25
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE JUSTICE
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 65

HALIFAX – A Canadian soldier has been charged in the fatal shooting of a colleague in Afghanistan early this year.

Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a reservist from Glace Bay, N.S., is charged with manslaughter following an investigation by the military.

He's also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Cpl. Kevin Megeney, 25, of New Glasgow, N.S., was killed on March 6 while in a tent on the Kandahar air field.

Wilcox is a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders.

(The Canadian Press)

Soldier charged with manslaughter; Accused of shooting fellow reservist in Kandahar last March

IDNUMBER 200710260142
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A18
ILLUSTRATION: Cpl. Kevin Megeney, 25, was killed on March 6, 2007, at the Kandaharbase. ;
BYLINE: Alison Auld
SOURCE: THE CANADIAN PRESS
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 417

The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said yesterday she feels "very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the manslaughter charge.

"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time, too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed. "I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

"Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said in an interview from Ottawa. "The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

Retired general Lewis MacKenzie explained that all soldiers coming back into Kandahar airfield from outside the wire are required to clear their weapons of ammunition.

If they fail to do so and the weapon is fired inside the base, an automatic charge of criminal negligence is usually laid, he told the Star's Allan Woods yesterday. If that bullet kills someone, even accidentally, the charge is manslaughter.

"The charges are almost automatic. It's not something that takes a long time to sort out," he said.

Family members have said they're eager for the process to move forward since they still have little insight into what occurred to Megeney, a 25-year-old reservist who was a friend of Wilcox.

"We're just looking at it as another step to finding out the truth," Megeney said. "We don't know anything about what happened that day."

Megeney's father, Dexter Megeney, said he wants the case to proceed but isn't seeking revenge for the death of his son, who became the 45th Canadian soldier to die there since the Canadian mission began in 2002. Seventy soldiers and one diplomat have died so far.

"We're letting them do their job," he said of the prosecutors. "We're not out for blood or anything."

The Canadian military follows the civilian Criminal Code in defining manslaughter as "culpable homicide" that falls short of murder.

Negligent performance of duty is a violation of the National Defence Act with a maximum penalty of disgraceful dismissal from the Forces.

Hillier's assessment dismissed; Prime Minister's Office at odds with top soldier's 10-year time frame to train troops and police

IDNUMBER 200710260135
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A18
ILLUSTRATION: FINBARR O'REILLY reuters Afghan National Army troops patrol an areanear the Taliban stronghold of Panjwaii town in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province. ;
BYLINE: Allan Woods
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 624

Afghan missionThe Prime Minister's Office has dismissed the blunt assessment from Canada's top soldier that the task of training Afghanistan's army would take at least five years longer than the 2011 end date the government laid out in last week's throne speech.

Gen. Rick Hillier, speaking at the end of a three-day visit to Kandahar, told reporters it will take "10 years or so" to build a national army that can defend the government against insurgents and potential external threats.

"You don't just build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said yesterday.

"It's going to take 10 years or so just to work through and build an army to whatever the final number that Afghanistan will have, and make them professional, and let them meet their security demands."

The goal of building up the army from its current count of 45,000 soldiers into a 70,000-strong force has taken on increasing importance among NATO member countries as it becomes politically more difficult to persuade nations to fight against a robust Taliban insurgency. Hillier said it takes about three years to train a battalion of up to 600 troops.

But Prime Minister Stephen Harper made the case in his Oct. 16 throne speech for a two-year extension of the military mission, saying that is what is needed to complete the training of the Afghan army and police.

"Our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011," the speech said.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier yesterday dismissed questions in the House of Commons about the discrepancy between Harper's and Hillier's assessments. However, a spokesperson for the Prime Minister, Sandra Buckler, stuck to the early end date, saying it was "achievable" and in line with the Afghanistan Compact, the agreement drawn up between the international community and the Afghan government. In her emailed statement, Buckler did not acknowledge Hillier's comments.

"We have said so many times before, and will continue to emphasize (that) it will be Parliament that will ultimately decide how long our Canadian Forces will remain in Afghanistan," she wrote.

The government has convened a panel chaired by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley to examine the possible options for Canada's future in the war-torn country. After its findings are released in February, MPs will be asked to vote on whether to extend the mission or inform NATO that Canada will not remain in Afghanistan past February 2009.

But the debate is already raging, and the confusion that emerged yesterday set off a nasty debate in Ottawa that had the opposition accusing the government of lying to Canadians.

"This is an enormous discrepancy and it comes down to who's telling the truth about this war," said NDP Leader Jack Layton.

"If what we're saying is that it's an open-ended war in perpetuity then I think a lot of Canadians are going to want to express a real concern about that. "

All of the opposition parties said they trusted Hillier's assessment over that of the Conservative government.

"I think that Gen. Hillier is telling the truth and Stephen Harper is in politics. Period," said Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe.

The confusion came at the end of a NATO meeting in the Netherlands aimed at boosting international participation for the coalition's mission in Afghanistan, particularly in the more dangerous southern provinces. Nine countries have reportedly come forward with offers of assistance, including Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Georgia.

The Germans have offered military trainers, but will restrict them to the more peaceful northern sections of the country. France has put up 50 military trainers bound for Uruzgan province where the Dutch are doing most of the fighting.

Even though Defence Minister Peter MacKay and Bernier, the foreign affairs minister, invested much time drumming up replacements or support for Canadian troops in Kandahar, there were no firm offers to send new troops to one of the country's most dangerous regions.

NATO's cringe reflex

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DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: AA06
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 369

Canada's major European allies talk about "sharing the burden" in Afghanistan. But Europe's cringe reflex was on open display this week when Defence Minister Peter MacKay pressed for more help from our North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners at a conference in the Netherlands. Precious little was on offer from NATO.

As Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier puts it, Canada urgently needs more "boots on the ground" in Kandahar, where Canadian troops are trying to suppress a stubborn Taliban insurgency. We also need more heavy-lift helicopters and specialized aerial surveillance aircraft. But while our NATO partners have all these military assets, they are loath to deploy them in combat to help us.

This fecklessness by countries such as Germany, France, Italy and Spain is being noted by Canadians as Prime Minister Stephen Harper considers extending our military activity in Afghanistan beyond 2009. Harper wants Canada to have a role there until at least 2011, subject to Parliament's approval. That approval grows harder to get every time a major NATO partner balks at sharing the burden fairly.

Canadians have fought in Afghanistan since 2002. But we aren't patsies. If NATO won't help, it can't expect us to carry the can forever.

The "progress" touted in the Netherlands this week was a joke. NATO plans to lease 20 civilian helicopters while military choppers sit idle at European bases. The Germans and French, shouldering easy duty, are willing to deploy just 250 more military instructors, most of them to relatively quiet zones. The Italians and Spanish have not publicly gone even that far. All insist on shielding their troops from combat. Now the scramble is on to strong-arm newer NATO members such as Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to do more, especially in the volatile south.

Meanwhile, the weak Afghan army is pleading for rifles.

This is a sad moment for the world's major military alliance. The United States is doing the hardest slogging in Afghanistan, followed by Britain, Canada and the Netherlands. There is a gaping disconnect between NATO's North Atlantic partners and the Europeans when it comes to pulling hard duty under fire. That, too, is being noticed.

Soldiering is in the Vida family's blood -- and they're proud to do their duty

IDNUMBER 200710260066
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Cityplus
PAGE: B3
COLUMN: Nick Lees
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Nick Lees, the Journal / Shandor Vida and dad GerryVida ;
KEYWORDS: 0
BYLINE: Nick Lees
SOURCE: The Edmonton Journal
WORD COUNT: 742

When Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary to crush the 1956 revolution, a childhood friend of Geza Vida saved his life.

"My father was a vehement, outspoken anti-communist and his friend had joined the party," says Gerry Vida.

"They didn't talk, but the friend knocked on our door and told my father he was on the list. He was to be hanged."

Geza Vida, his wife and their two sons, Gerry and Charlie, fled Hungary via Austria and arrived in Canada 50 years ago this year.

"We are celebrating living in a democratic country that shares the same values as my father," says Gerry, 65.

"My sons Shandor, Russell and I have served in the Canadian Armed Forces for a total of about three-quarters of a century." (To be precise, 73 years.)

Gerry's dad served with the Hungarian Army during the Second World War and survived being shot through the lungs by a British fighter pilot.

The Russians later took him prisoner and made him an interpreter.

"I joined the PPCLI as a private soldier at the age of 18," says Gerry, a 37-year Forces' veteran.

He went on to teach at the Airborne Regiment's school and became the officer in charge of the Skyhawks parachute demonstration team.

"On my first jump, I landed on top of another jumper's parachute," says Gerry. "My parachute had collapsed completely, so I slid down and hung onto the bands on the bottom of his parachute.

"About 500 feet above the ground I couldn't hang on any longer and fell. Fortunately, my parachute opened."

Gerry has logged 3,076 jumps, including the first human free-fall trial of the CF-18 fighter jet's ejection-seat parachute. He's had some half-dozen malfunctions in the air, which forced him to pull his reserve parachute.

"Somewhere in there I have two broken legs," says Gerry. "But one of my most difficult jumps was at the CNE International Air Show when someone had packed my parachute backwards. It was hard to control and smoke streamed ahead of me rather than behind.

"Rather than risk falling among Toronto's skyscrapers, I headed out to splash down in Lake Ontario. The young man who had packed my parachute was told to leave town before I killed him."

Gerry was surprised when his sons both joined the Forces. But Shandor (Shandy) says military tradition runs in the family, especially on his mother's side. His English-born great-grandfather Harry Taylor served with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment (4 PPCLI) and saw First World War action between 1915 and 1918. "He was wounded several times," says Shandor. "He won the Military Medal for valour in 1916. We were never able to find out exactly why. He would never talk about it."

But Shandor's grandfather, Dr. Russell Frederick Taylor, a cardiac specialist who has a pavilion named for him at University Hospital, further inspired his grandsons. "He was a bomber navigator during the Second World War and was once shot down over the English Channel," says Shandor.

Gerry Vida met his first wife when Taylor was to pilot the aircraft from which Gerry jumped one day and took along his daughter Mary. Their son Shandor joined the military in 1983, straight from Evansburg's high school. Postings took him to Germany and Nicaragua and saw him serve at the Combat Training Centre.

"I experienced many of the things soldiers do," says Shandor, tagged "Darth Vida" by his men for his no-nonsense approach to soldiering.

"Patrolling in the hills of Nicaragua, we found ourselves in a minefield one day and gingerly retraced our steps."

As an exchange officer with the British, he was in Afghanistan when it was said no Canadians were serving there.

"The most frightening time was travelling in a Blackhawk helicopter that was fired on," he says. "I could see tracer bullets from heavy machine guns streaming up towards us."

Shandor was the last Airborne adjutant before the regiment was disbanded in 1995. He also commanded 1 PPCLI which was granted Freedom of the City in 2003. Following 21 years service, he moved to Red Deer and is vice-president of a scrap metal business.

Russell, 41, who also served with the Airborne regiment, is now with the Edmonton-based 1 Combat Engineers. He has had postings to Cyprus, Croatia (twice) and Bosnia (three times.)

"I mainly worked on a task force clearing minefields in Afghanistan," says Russell. "We also investigated incidents to determine what had happened."

The soldier had a personal friend from near Edmonton killed by a shoulder-fired rocket and, like others, knows many of those who lost their lives

Russell, who returned from Afghanistan in September 2006, is married and has a 4 1/2-month-old daughter. "Soldiers join the army to do a job for their country," says Russell, who could be posted back to Afghanistan within the year. "When called on, they knuckle under and get the job done."

"The morale is high because they know most Canadians support the mission."

His wife is totally behind the job he does. "Anyone considering marrying into the military should be informed of possible consequences and make a choice," says Russell. "I plan to stay in and working at what we are doing."

Shandor sums it up: "No one misses the bureaucracy in the forces. But soldiers miss being a soldier and being with other soldiers."

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Trial will ease pain, of loss, says soldier's mother; Another soldier charged in son's death

IDNUMBER 200710260018
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
KEYWORDS: COURT MARTIAL; MANSLAUGHTER; CRIME
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Ken Meaney and Meagan Fitzpatrick
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 348

OTTAWA – The mother of a Canadian who was shot dead in Afghanistan says the trial of the soldier charged with killing him will ease some of the pain of the loss.

Karen Megeney says she still doesn't know how or why her son, Cpl. Ronald Kevin Megeney, died on March 6, 2007. But the court martial of the man accused in his death — another Canadian soldier, Cpl. Matthew Wilcox — will answer some of those questions.

"It's not that we wanted to see charges laid," said Megeney, of Stellarton, 150 kilometres north of Halifax. "I mean, we don't know what happened. We have no idea what took place or why our son is gone. So if they think charges had to be laid ... they did the investigation. They would know better."

Megeney, 25, a reservist with the Nova Scotia Highlanders, based in New Glasgow, N.S., was shot in the chest in a tent on the Kandahar airfield. He was rushed to the hospital on the base but died within an hour of admission.

Wilcox, a reserve soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., faces one charge each of manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

The Canadian Forces said in a release Thursday that "based on all evidence collected, ballistic and forensic analysis completed by the CFNIS (Canadian Forces National Investigation Service), Cpl. Megeney was killed by gunfire originating from a weapon allegedly held by Cpl. Wilcox."

Karen Megeney said Canadian military investigators informed them of the charges in person.

"The investigators came to the house to tell us that charges had been laid against the young fellow," she said.

She said the military hasn't told them anything about what happened to their son, and they don't expect them to. Megeney said the trial is still months away, but when it starts, she will be there every day.

"I don't know if it'll bring closure. Certainly, it'll help a lot to answer some questions. And we can put that behind us, because we'll know why and what happened," she said.

Megeney's son was friends with Wilcox, and Megeney said she feels for what they are going through, too.

"Oh, my heart goes out to them. I feel really bad," she said. "They're hurting, too. That's their boy. ... He's got to live with that, too. I feel bad for them all."

Hillier wants more help from NATO allies

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PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: World Digest
KEYWORDS: ORGANIZATIONS; FOREIGN RELATIONS; DEFENCE;
PROPAGANDA; AFGHANISTAN; THE NETHERLANDS;
CANADA
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 97

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD – Canada's chief of the defence staff left Afghanistan calling for more helicopters and military help from NATO members in the country's troubled southern provinces.

Concluding a three-day visit to Kandahar, Gen. Rick Hillier said Thursday he would like to see more international ground troops in southern Afghanistan to speed up progress.

"This is a NATO mission and that means it requires all of the NATO countries to do their utmost to be successful," he said. Hillier's comments came as NATO defence ministers held talks in the Netherlands aimed at committing more resources against the Taliban insurgency.

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

IDNUMBER 200710260070

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2007.10.26

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A26

Colour Photo: Ed Stelmach; Colour Photo: Thomas Svekla ; Colour Photo: Ric McIver ; Colour Photo: Joseph Estrada ; Colour Photo: Jason Lee, Reuters / Picture of the Day: A girl fails to maintain a crouching posture as students go through etiquette training at a vocational school in Beijing on Thursday. Around 1,400 aviation service students, mostly between the ages of 16 and 17, are currently going through physical conditioning as well as professional training for dressing and etiquette in order to serve as stewards during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, according to the school announcement. ; Colour Photo: Pierre Alvarez ; Colour Photo: Take your jack-o'-lantern from ordinary to artful ; Photo: (See hard copy for description). ; Colour Photo: Chilling children ;

KEYWORDS: 0

BYLINE: Compiled by Meg de Jong

SOURCE: Calgary Herald

WORD COUNT: 1035

Top Stories

Changes Will Boost Royalties by \$1.4 Billion

Premier Ed Stelmach announced Thursday that Alberta will boost oil royalties as crude prices surge, but the province backed away from some of the more contentious recommendations in a review panel's report that the industry sought to discredit. Under the new measures, Alberta's take from the oil and gas industry will increase by \$1.4 billion, or 20 per cent above projected 2010 revenues.

Page A1

More Than One Edmonton Serial Killer Sought: Police

The trial of accused prostitute-killer Thomas Svekla heard Thursday that police are investigating the possibility that more than one serial killer may be responsible for the deaths of over a dozen Edmonton-area prostitutes. Svekla, 39, faces second-degree murder charges in the deaths of two sex-trade workers.

Page A8

News Sections -- A and B

City & Region

First Nation Braces for School Payments

First Nation reserves throughout Alberta are bracing for the perils -- from fraud to scams to increased drug trafficking -- they fear will accompany the lump-sum residential school payments of up to \$38,000 that are

expected to flow from today.

Page B1

Alderman Pushes Campaign Financing Reform

The new city council's commitment to reforming its campaign finance rules will get its first test next month, with 10 proposed changes up for debate. Ald. Ric McIver will introduce the notice of motion at the Nov. 12 council meeting.

Page B1

Canada

Canadian Soldier Charged in Shooting Death of Comrade

A Canadian soldier is being charged in the shooting death of his comrade in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces said Thursday.

Page A3

World

Canadian Said Among Five Oil Workers Kidnapped

Darfur rebels on Thursday gave a foreign oil consortium a week to pull out or face further attacks after they kidnapped five oil workers, including foreigners, during a raid on a Sudanese oilfield. "We attacked Defra oilfield and kidnapped two foreign workers; one is Canadian and another is Iraqi," said Abdelaziz el-Nur Ashr, field commander for the Justice and Equality Movement in Kordofan, east of Darfur.

Page A9

Thirty Die in Pakistan Military Explosion

A blast tore through a security forces vehicle in restive northwest Pakistan Thursday, killing 30 people and wounding dozens more, officials said.

Page A22

Former Philippine President Pardoned

Former Philippine president Joseph Estrada was given a full pardon Thursday just weeks after he was jailed for life on charges of stealing tens of millions of dollars from the nation's coffers.

Page A22

Traffic

- Road closed: On 30th Avenue between 4th Street and 2nd Street N.W. until 3 p.m. today.
- Lane closed: On McKnight Boulevard at Edmonton Trail N.E., starting 7 a.m. Saturday until 6 p.m. Sunday.

- Right lane closed, speed restricted to 50 km/h: On westbound Crowchild Trail, west of Crowfoot Rise N.W. until Sunday.
- Right lane closure, speed restrictions: On northbound 14th Street at Berkley Gate N.W. until Sunday.
- Road closure: On 42nd Street between Bow Trail and Windermere Road S.W. until Oct. 31.

Commuter Weather

6 A.M. Off to Work: Mainly sunny.

Temperature: –3 C

12 Noon Lunch: Variably cloudy. Winds light.

Temperature: 4 C

5 P.M. Heading Home: Clear.

Temperature: 3 C

Overnight: Clear with cloudy periods developing overnight. Low: –6 C

Saturday: Sunny. High: 10 C Low: –4 C

Thursday: High: 7.3 C Low: –2.0 C

Online Extras

News: GTA police seeking task force to deal with N.S. pimp problem.

News: Quebec immigration commission seeks to avoid 'what happened in France.'

Sports: Playing in World Series topped all other achievements for Walker.

Quote of the Day

"I think climate change is probably exacerbating the conditions that give rise to wildfires in southern California"

Jane Barr, Canadian author of a report that the planet is in danger of crossing a "tipping point" of irreversible damage to its atmosphere, climate, water and ecosystems. See story, Page A9.

Calgary Business — E1

Markets

– TSX Composite 36.43 14124.94

– Dow Jones 3.33 13671.92

– Nasdaq 23.9 2750.86

– TSX Venture 33.5 3052.18

Anxiety Hangs Over Oilpatch

Oilpatch officials were stunned by a major overhaul of Alberta's oil and gas royalties, saying the provincial government has "dramatically and significantly" changed the rules. The industry needs time to review the changes, but early reaction is mostly disappointment, said Pierre Alvarez, president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Page E1

Business Squeezed for Space

Vacancy rates in Calgary's commercial real estate markets are hovering in the one per cent range thanks to continuing high demand for space.

Page E3

Editorial — A24

Risky Business in the Oilsands

While there are things to praise in the New Royalty Framework . . . there are some incalculable risks associated with the new regime.

Page A24

Letter of the Day

"I strongly object to the Calgary Zoo's plans to once again house polar bears. . . . To house such large-ranging carnivores in far too small artificial enclosures that will never meet their biological requirements is irresponsible, disrespectful and highly unethical."

Reno Sommerhalder, Page A25

Sports — D1

Sublime Shooting Star

After Wednesday's games, Calgary Flames superstar Jarome Iginla sat third in the National Hockey League in total shots with 46, and this season, those shots are going in at a pace he's approached rarely over his seven previous NHL campaigns and, as an added bonus, he's setting up goals like never before to open a campaign.

Page D1

National Lacrosse League Season Un-Cancelled

National Lacrosse League Commissioner Jim Jennings guaranteed us 11 days ago that his league had reached, and passed, the deadline for a new collective bargaining agreement to be forged with its part-time hired help. Turns out the deadline was floating, writes columnist George Johnson. Thursday the sides came to a seven-year agreement, un-cancelling the season.

Page D6

Real Life --- C8

Take Your Jack-O'-Lantern From Ordinary to Artful

It's time to kick your jack-o'-lantern up a notch. With that in mind, the Herald's graphic design team came up with five fabulous pumpkin designs that will stop trick-or-treaters in their tracks this Halloween. Visit calgaryherald.com for printable patterns.

Page C8

Calgary Cosmetics Upstart Lands Spot on TV Show

Calgary's Lit Cosmetics has landed in prime time and is on the fast track to the big time --- with an appearance on a national TV show and a prospective deal with a global cosmetics giant.

Page C9

Sudoku

World's Hottest Puzzle Craze

How to Play:

Complete this grid by placing the digits 1 to 9 exactly once, and only once, in each horizontal row and in each column. Also, each digit should only appear once in every 3x3 shaded or white mini-grid in the puzzle. Sudoku appears on the 5 Minute Herald page Monday to Friday and on the Saturday and Sunday puzzle pages.

Entertainment --- C1

Chilling Children

The children of horror have no equals. The warping of innocence, or evil in the guise of the child, are themes that Canadian horror film producer Steve Hoban believes are poised to make a cinematic resurgence.

Page C1

Tonight's TV Picks:

- Ghost Whisperer: 9 p.m. on CTV (Ch. 3).
- Torchwood: 9 p.m. on CBC (Ch. 6).

It's An Odd World

Australian Claims Third Most Bizarre World Record

Australian Les Stewart holds what the website Oddee.com calls the "third most bizarre" of all Guinness Book world records: having typed out the written numbers "one" through "one million," over a period of 16 years from 1983 to 1998, according to an August story in his local newspaper Sunshine Coast Daily. He said he

typed for 20 minutes at the beginning of every waking hour during that time because he "wanted something to do." "It just came naturally to me."

Hillier seeks more NATO help in south Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200710260017
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
COLUMN: Kelly Cryderman
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Gen. Rick Hillier, right, Canadian chief of the defence staff, listens to Maj. Jean-Sebastien Fortin, left, at Ma'sum Ghar camp in Kandahar province, southern Afghanistan, this week. "This is a NATO mission and that means it requires all of the NATO countries to do their utmost to be successful," Hillier says. ;
KEYWORDS: WAR; ARMED FORCES; TERRORISM; AFGHANISTAN
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Kelly Cryderman
SOURCE: CanWest News Service; with files from Agence France-Presse and Reuters
WORD COUNT: 619

Canada's chief of the defence staff left Afghanistan on Thursday calling for more helicopters and military help from NATO members reluctant to work in the country's troubled southern provinces.

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"This is a NATO mission and that means it requires all of the NATO countries to do their utmost to be successful," he told reporters.

The lobbying he does among his international peers only goes so far, Hillier said. "You can only put so much pressure on the military commanders.

"These are decisions that are made by political leaders."

Hillier's comments came as NATO defence ministers held discussions in the Dutch town of Noordwijk aimed at drumming up troops and equipment to help put down a Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan.

It's a source of increasing tension and division among NATO members. The U.S., British, Dutch and Canadian military are carrying the lion's share of the fighting in the most dangerous parts of the country, and want greater participation from some of their more unwilling European allies.

The talks yielded some offers of more resources for the military campaign, but the deployments won't necessarily be in the south. Overall, the offers are unlikely to satisfy the countries carrying the heaviest burden in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates on Thursday asked Europe's generals to press their political leaders to lift restrictions that stop commanders from sending troops into the most violent areas of Afghanistan.

Gates said progress in Afghanistan was fragile and could be lost.

"Many allies are unwilling to share the risks, commit the resources and follow through on collective commitments to this mission and to each other. As a result, we risk allowing what has been achieved in Afghanistan to slip away," he said in a speech to an annual gathering of European military officers, the Conference of European Armies, in Ramstein, Germany.

He took aim at caveats, the restrictions some governments place on the use of their troops in the war zone. The caveats are classified, but a senior U.S. defence official said they total 62. Some restrict the use of troops in combat and in the most violent areas of the country.

Hillier declined to specify which countries should be stepping up, but names including Germany, France, Spain and Italy have often come up.

Hillier said southern Afghanistan needs more ground troops, unmanned aerial vehicles and helicopters.

"There are many helicopters of medium and heavy lifting in Europe," Hillier said. "Lots of those could be deployed here and could be extremely useful."

Responding to reports NATO will hire private civilian helicopters to move soldiers and supplies in Afghanistan, Hillier said it's just one more solution.

But Hillier noted there are already some positive signs from other countries.

"For the first time this past summer and early fall, we saw the Portuguese company down here in the south, doing some absolutely excellent work right out in one of the most high-risk areas in Kandahar province."

Hillier said it will take at least a decade to build a real Afghan army. The international community, he said, will also have to be involved for the long term to help create a stable government and economy.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country," he said, noting Afghanistan endured "25 years of destruction."

"But I think they're increasingly aware that you just don't do that overnight."

Canada's top soldier had little to say about the Harper government's throne speech, which indicated the Conservatives want a military presence in Afghanistan until 2011. The current commitment extends to 2009.

The Dutch are also still debating their presence in the southern province of Uruzgan. They are committed until next year.

Hillier arrived in Kandahar on Monday for his first visit with Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, often referred to as the Van Doo. The regiment arrived in Kandahar for a six-month tour in July.

One Canadian diplomat and 71 soldiers have died in Afghanistan since 2002. This year alone, it's believed hundreds of Afghan civilians have been killed in fighting across the country.

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For Kelly Cryderman's first impressions of Afghanistan, visit: CalgaryHerald.com

Canadian charged in death of fellow soldier

IDNUMBER 200710260016
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Calgary Herald Archive / Cpl. Ronald Kevin Megeney, a reservist, was shot and killed while in his tent on March 6, 2007. ;
KEYWORDS: COURT MARTIAL; MANSLAUGHTER; CRIME
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Ken Meaney and Meagan Fitzpatrick
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 407

A Canadian soldier is being charged in the shooting death of his comrade in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces said Thursday.

Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a reserve soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., faces one charge each of manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

The charges relate to the death of Cpl. Ronald Kevin Megeney, who died March 6, 2007.

Megeney, 25, from Stellarton, N.S., was in his tent on the base at Kandahar Airfield when he was shot in the chest. He was rushed to the hospital on the base, but died within an hour of admission.

Following the incident, one of Megeney's relatives said the family had been told the soldier's death was an apparent accident and the result of friendly fire.

Megeney was a reservist with the Nova Scotia Highlanders, who are based in New Glasgow, N.S.

"Based on all evidence collected, ballistic and forensic analysis completed by the CFNIS (Canadian Forces National Investigation Service), Cpl. Megeney was killed by gunfire originating from a weapon allegedly held by Cpl. Wilcox," the Canadian Forces said in a release.

Karen Megeney says she still doesn't know how or why her son, died. But the court martial of Wilcox will answer some of those questions.

"It's not that we wanted to see charges laid," said Megeney, of Stellarton, 150 kilometres north of Halifax.

"I mean, we don't know what happened. We have no idea what took place or why our son is gone. So if they think charges had to be laid . . . they did the investigation. They would know better."

Megeney said Canadian military investigators informed them of the charges in person.

"The investigators came to the house to tell us that charges had been laid against the young fellow," she said.

She said the military hasn't told them anything about what happened to their son, and they don't expect them to.

"They can't discuss it with us in case it does go to trial," she said.

Megeney said the trial is still months away, but when it starts she will be there every day.

It is not unusual for soldiers to have weapons in their sleeping quarters. Soldiers are required to carry a weapon with them at all times on the base, but accidental discharges are rare. Unless specifically ordered otherwise, Canadian soldiers must make sure their rifles and sidearms are unloaded and the ammunition carried separately.

Wilcox is not the only Canadian soldier currently facing charges related to the death of a fellow soldier in Afghanistan.

In March, Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser was charged with one count of manslaughter and one count of negligent performance of duty in connection with the death of Master Cpl. Jeffrey Scott Walsh. Earlier this month, the Canadian Forces confirmed those charges will proceed to a court martial.

Walsh, based out of Shilo, Man., with the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was killed in August 2006, less than a week after arriving in Afghanistan. He had been conducting a routine patrol in Kandahar province.

Defence chief seeks more NATO help in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200710260015
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
COLUMN: Kelly Cryderman
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Gen. Rick Hillier, right, Canadian chief of the defence staff, listens to Maj. Jean-Sebastien Fortin, left, at Ma'sum Ghar camp in Kandahar province, southern Afghanistan, this week. "This is a NATO mission and that means it requires all of the NATO countries to do their utmost to be successful," Hillier says. ;
KEYWORDS: WAR; ARMED FORCES; TERRORISM; AFGHANISTAN
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Kelly Cryderman
SOURCE: CanWest News Service; with files from Agence France-Presse and Reuters
WORD COUNT: 616

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"These are decisions that are made by political leaders."

Hillier's comments came as NATO defence ministers held discussions in the Dutch town of Noordwijk aimed at drumming up troops and equipment to help put down a Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan.

It's a source of increasing tension and division among NATO members. The U.S., British, Dutch and Canadian military are carrying the lion's share of the fighting in the most dangerous parts of the country, and want greater participation from some of their more unwilling European allies.

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EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A2
KEYWORDS: 0
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 113

Green Guide

– Smog is a growing problem in Calgary. Check out the guide to CO₂–reducing transportation alternatives — like carpooling.

Virtual Stamps

– Download a full Stampeders team photo for your computer' wallpaper from our Current Features link.

Daily News Videos

– We have the top news videos from Global Calgary featured on the Herald's home page.

Real Life

– Log on and download one of our exclusive Halloween pumpkin carving stencils. From the exotic to the Flames, we have your pumpkin covered.

Photo Galleries

– 139 Calgary children and 90 volunteers spent a day in the Magic Kingdom recently, thanks to Dreams Take Flight.

– Dispatches from Afghanistan: Herald reporter Kelly Cryderman updates from Kandahar.

Herald Hockey

– The Flames, still flying from a comeback win over the Wild, are gearing up to face the Colorado Avalanche. Check out the injury report and video from the morning skate online.

Online Extras

Unique Content That Goes Beyond the Headlines

– News: Canadian university endowment funds skyrocket

– Sports: Vancouver Canucks struggle at beginning of the NHL season

General Calls for More Help in Afghanistan

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PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Gen. Rick Hillier is calling for increased NATO support in Afghanistan. Canada's chief of defence staff said Thursday it will take at least a decade to build an Afghan army, the Herald's Kelly Cryderman reports. News, Page A3 ;
KEYWORDS: 0
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 4

NO TEXT

Canadian Commander Seeks NATO Help in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200710260001

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2007.10.26

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A1 / FRONT

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: The Herald's Kelly Cryderman begins a six weektour reporting on our troops in Afghanistan. She writes that Gen. Rick Hillier says it will take a decade to build an Afghan army, and Canada's highest-ranking soldier wants increased NATO support now. News, Page A3 ;

KEYWORDS: 0

SOURCE: Calgary Herald

WORD COUNT: 4

NO TEXT

Afghans far from standing on own

SOURCETAG 0710260987
PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 8
ILLUSTRATION: photo of RICK HILLIER Chief of defence staff
BYLINE: BILL GRAVELAND, CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 212

An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, Canada's top soldier says. Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation yesterday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check.

VERY COMPLEX

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion — 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Canuck soldier charged Mother of slain corporal says she feels 'very bad' for 22-year-old accused of manslaughter

SOURCETAG: 0710260900
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 41
ILLUSTRATION: photo of KEVIN MEGENEY Killed
BYLINE: ALISON AULD, THE CANADIAN PRESS
DATELINE: HALIFAX
WORD COUNT: 359

The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said yesterday she feels "very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9-mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time, too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home yesterday morning, said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed.

"I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

"Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said.

"The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

Garrick said he couldn't release any details of what is alleged to have happened in the incident since the case could go before a court martial in the coming months.

Family members have said they're eager for the process to move forward since they still have little insight into what occurred to Megeney, a 25-year-old reservist who was a friend of Wilcox.

NOT SEEKING REVENGE

"We're just looking at it as another step to finding out the truth," Megeney said from the home where the red-headed soldier was raised. "We don't know anything about what happened that day."

The two soldiers were said to be good friends when they deployed together from their base in central Nova Scotia in December and shared a tent, where Garrick said they were prohibited from carrying loaded weapons.

Megeney's father, Dexter, said he wants the case to proceed but isn't seeking revenge for the death of his son, who became the 45th Canadian soldier to since the Canadian mission began in 2002. Seventy soldiers and one diplomat have died on the mission. KEYWORDS=CANADA

Make videos, not war

SOURCETAG 0710260899
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 41
ILLUSTRATION: photo of HOOP SCHEFFER "Horrendous"
BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, THE CANADIAN PRESS
DATELINE: NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands
WORD COUNT: 177

When NATO put out a call for more equipment in southern Afghanistan, it was expecting guns and helicopters — not cameras and video gear.

But that's what it got from Denmark: An offer of about \$1.4 million to buy video equipment that will ultimately be used to deliver documented Taliban outrages to a television near you — or to the popular website YouTube.

At the end of a two-day meeting of defence ministers in the Netherlands, NATO's secretary general reiterated yesterday that the alliance needs to do a better job in public relations both in home countries and Afghanistan.

"What we can do is improve our public messaging," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told reporters.

"Part of that public messaging could be to show to the people — and they can draw their own conclusions — what our opponent, our enemy in Afghanistan, looks like; what they do."

He accused the Taliban of performing "the most horrendous human rights violations."

Two weeks ago, de Hoop Scheffer made a pitch to declassify video surveillance footage shot by NATO forces throughout the Afghan conflict. Allied countries have a variety of electronic intelligence-gathering means at their disposal.

The Danes responded with an initiative to provide equipment to transfer and catalogue existing video taken by the various countries involved in fighting the insurgency war. **KEYWORDS=WORLD**

10 Taliban dead in coalition raid

SOURCETAG 0710260898

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.10.26

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 41

BYLINE: NOOR KHAN, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 122

U.S.-led coalition and Afghan troops attacked a gathering of Taliban militants in southern Afghanistan, leaving 10 insurgents dead and 14 wounded, an Afghan official said yesterday.

Four Afghan soldiers were also wounded in the attack staged Wednesday evening in the Daychopan district of Zabul province, district chief Fazel Bari said.

The operation was launched after intelligence reports indicated a Taliban gathering was taking place in the area, Bari said.

Earlier Wednesday, a car bomb exploded near a convoy carrying a provincial governor in eastern Afghanistan, leaving nine people wounded.

Afghan officials said Arsallah Jamal, the governor of Khost province, was unhurt in the blast in Khost city, but five of his bodyguards and four civilians were wounded.

It was at least the third attempt on Jamal's life.

Also yesterday, an Australian special forces soldier has been killed fighting Taliban insurgents in southern Afghanistan, Australian defence officials said. **KEYWORDS=WORLD**

Wild Art

SOURCETAG 0710260897

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.10.26

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 41

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters THE FAMILY STONE A stone painted and inscribed by French–Canadian soldiers thanking their families in Canada for their support sits on a mountain top overlooking a valley in the Panjwaii district of Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan.

WORD COUNT: 0

Afghans far from standing on own

SOURCETAG 0710260894
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 39
ILLUSTRATION: photo of RICK HILLIER Chief of defence staff
BYLINE: BILL GRAVELAND, THE CANADIAN PRESS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 212

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His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check.

VERY COMPLEX

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion — 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Letters to the Editor Column

SOURCETAG 0710260882
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 21
COLUMN: Letters to the Editor
WORD COUNT: 658

HUSH-HUSH FIREMEN

Re "Hush-hush firemen's deal" (Oct. 25): If anyone is surprised by this finding then they are showing their naivete. City Council has shown for many years that it is there for themselves and their friends and certainly not for the lowly tax payer. Frankly, this finding is just the tip of the iceberg. Finding \$500 million in savings is easy, if you know where to look and have the courage to acknowledge what you see. There is not enough courage on this council!

W. WIDLA

(Sound the alarms!)

DOING WHAT THEY PLEASE

"It was an enormously difficult decision for us to impose new taxes on the people of Toronto," said Mayor David Miller (as he passed the champagne bottle). Sure, whatever you say, David. Miller and his cronies pretended to listen to the people, then promptly did exactly what they planned to do anyway. As a result, home owners and drivers are being unfairly targeted to subsidize those fortunate enough to dodge this latest tax grab. The additional funds will not be nearly enough, and City Council will have "no choice" but to raise property taxes yet again. The only thing that will surprise me is if Miller gets re-elected for another term.

DAVID MCNAMARA

TORONTO

(Returning undeserving politicians is fast becoming a Toronto tradition)

CBC CONCLUSIONS ACCURATE

Licia Corbella misunderstood an aspect of our reporting of the recent polling data to come out of Afghanistan ("Truth surprises CBC," Oct. 24). CBC didn't "express surprise" at the data as she claims. Based on separate polling data about Canadians' somewhat negative views of our troops' success in Afghanistan, we concluded, reasonably enough, that some Canadians would be surprised to hear how positively our mission was being received. Judging by the countrywide reaction to the data, as represented in news media across the country, we were correct.

JOHN CRUICKSHANK

PUBLISHER

CBC NEWS, TORONTO

(Don't sprain anything patting yourself on the butt)

TAX AND SPEND

Re "City Hall's secret hose job," (Sue—Ann Levy, Oct. 25): Yikes! Now we really know why Mayor Miller was so desperate to get his insidious taxes passed! I can see road tolls, sidewalk and alcohol taxes on the horizon. The other unions must be laughing at Miller and taxpayers and savouring the meal to come. So much for Miller's transparency — if this information had been known before the vote I'm sure there would have been a much different outcome. What concerns me is not someone like Cliff Jenkins, who is unfairly singled out. Where were the so-called tax fighters like Ford, Nunziata and Holyday, and even Grimes who brokered the deal?

ROBERT SNOWDEN

MISSISSAUGA

(Fast asleep)

DEFINE 'INDIGENOUS'

Re "Canada's wrong on human rights," (Point of View, Paul Berton, Oct. 25): I am glad Canada, the U.S. and Australia resisted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Can anyone explain why we have to dissect and balkanize human rights? What is an indigenous people? If you trace your relatives back for three generations, does that make you indigenous? How about one, two, four or five generations? Where does this nonsense stop? People are people, treat them with dignity and you won't have to worry about getting your shorts in a knot.

DENNIS J. CSATARI

HAMILTON

(Too late)

REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

Re "Fanning anti-immigrant flames" (Lorrie Goldstein, Oct. 25): While I don't agree with the Quebec Identity Act as proposed by Parti Quebecois Leader Pauline Marois, I see no reason why Canadians should not expect those who immigrate to this country to make an attempt to learn at least one of the official languages. It does not make me an intolerant bigot to expect to be able to converse with my fellow citizens. Canada has bent over backwards to accommodate immigrants and we ask very little in return. Multiculturalism has failed if it doesn't also include Canadian culture.

MELISSA HILLIER

(See ya at the hockey game, eh)

Letters to the Editor Column

SOURCETAG 0710260797
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 14
COLUMN: Letters to the Editor
WORD COUNT: 542

Re: "Truth surprises CBC" (Oct. 24). Licia Corbella misunderstood an aspect of our reporting of the recent polling data to come out of Afghanistan. CBC didn't "express surprise" at the data. Based on separate polling data about Canadians' somewhat negative views of our troops' success in Afghanistan, we concluded, reasonably enough, that some Canadians would be surprised to hear how positively our mission was being received. Judging by the countrywide reaction to the data, as represented in news media across Canada, we were correct.

JOHN CRUICKSHANK (Publisher, CBC News)

TORONTO

(It's still old news that Afghans want foreign troops in their country)

I was very pleased to hear that council voted to open Albion Rd.

I am flabbergasted that council will reconsider the decision in two weeks. What kind of democracy is this?

Are you going to defer every decision to a secondary vote, due to absent councillors, because one councillor does not like the outcome?

Will you please get on with re-opening this road in accordance with the vote held this week.

SANDRA PETERS

(Please be patient, it's hard to make a decision with only three years to think about it)

Re: "A port in the storm" (Oct. 25). I am a volunteer with a victims assistance service which operates in co-operation with the Ottawa Police.

Like Earl McRae, I have met with many victims of spousal abuse at neutral locations. I have also accompanied many of the braver ones, who left their abusive relationships to seek support from shelters, back to their places of residence, accompanied by police officers on entry, to retrieve vital documents, such as health cards. I am also sad to report that for some, a return to live with the "monster" occurs. Nevertheless, the first step is usually a move toward a fresh start.

On behalf of those who have bravely turned their backs on the insidious times they succumbed to, by fear of leaving or by not knowing they can — and should — leave, thanks Earl for assisting in exposing this dark side of human activity.

JACK DONEGANI

OTTAWA

(We need to work together as a community to put an end to this violence)

Re: "A port in the storm" (Oct. 25). As president of La maison d'amitie, the only francophone shelter in Ottawa for battered women and children, I read with interest Earl McRae's column. Although we live in a progressive society, domestic violence is still very much a taboo subject and often candid conversation about it still makes people uncomfortable. In publicizing the story of an abused woman, a woman who is part of our own community, it helps to get the message out that there is support for battered women and their children.

However, I would like to address one statement. McRae wrote, "A lot of these women are not sophisticated, not informed, not well educated." These are myths. We hear that domestic violence only exists in families who are poor or disadvantaged, who have mental challenges or disabilities, or who are immigrants or members of ethnic minorities. Violence against women exists at all levels of our society regardless of social class, profession, ethnic origin or whether one is poor.

I hope the Ottawa Sun continues to raise the issue of domestic violence by creating awareness about this problem, and that something can be done to stop violence against women. According to a Statistics Canada report, 52 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2000. In 2001, that number increased to 69.

There is a helpline, Femaide, for women who are more comfortable speaking in French. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The toll free number is 1-877-336-2433.

EUGENIE DORE (President, La maison d'amitie)

(We too hope this violence can be stopped)

Afghans far from standing on own

SOURCETAG 0710260793
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 8
ILLUSTRATION: photo of RICK HILLIER Chief of defence staff
BYLINE: BILL GRAVELAND, CP
WORD COUNT: 209

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The final chapter

SOURCETAG 0710260779

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.10.26

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 2

ILLUSTRATION: file photo by Tony Caldwell Holding her umbrella, Alyssa Kelly of Kanata is a blur of motion as she runs past a mural of two people reading at Solo Books in October 2004. The store is closing after 20 years.

BYLINE: EARL MCRAE, OTTAWA SUN

COLUMN: McRae's World

WORD COUNT: 635

A death in Westboro. It'll be all over for Bernie Stewart at six o'clock in the evening next Monday. He is 67 years old.

The next day men will come to where Bernie Stewart once lived and worked and take away all the belongings he loved. His family of more than 2,000 will mourn his passing. Many of them will cry that he's gone.

For the last 20 years of his life, Bernie Stewart — long, lanky, soft-spoken, affable Bernie Stewart, former RCAF airman, former standup comic, current chairman of the Westboro Business Improvement Association — was much of what made Westboro a good, sweet place for living and working, and it won't be the same without him anymore up the hill off Richmond Rd. in the little stucco house at 396 Athlone Ave.

"A woman came in last week and she was in tears," says Stewart. "She'd been coming here since she was 10. Others told me they won't allow me to do this. It's not going to be easy. People come in with their children and I remember their parents as children. I have a customer base of about 2,000. I've made so many friends. I've even been invited to their homes. I'll really miss them all, but after almost 20 years, it's time. I'm just too old to sign another five-year lease."

COULD HAVE SOLD

Bernie Stewart could have sold his Solo Books used bookstore to someone who'd have kept it going, but that wouldn't have helped a special group of people so dear to his heart. The men he arranged to come to his bookstore Tuesday after he closes it forever at 6 p.m. Monday will be from the Department of National Defence, and Bernie wants the last several thousand of his books they'll take away flown to our soldiers in Afghanistan.

Just as he had done with his 800 books sent to them last year through Operation Santa Claus. Just as he had done with his 2,000 books sent in 1991 to our troops in the Persian Gulf. Bernie Stewart's legacy to the Canadian soldiers at war through A Death In Westboro.

"The children's books will probably go to our bases over here," says Stewart who has lived alone in a flat above his small, bright, books-bedecked store on Athlone Ave. after relocating five years ago from his first store on Richmond Rd. He's down to about 3,500 books from 10,000 when he started the closeout sale in August, and for the first time he'll be open this Sunday with his books, which he sanitizes whether they need it nor not, ranging in price from 50cents to \$2.

Has he noticed changes in reading habits over the past 20 years?

He gestures toward his computer. "This. Young people don't read books as much. Most don't even read the newspapers, they're not interested in the news. They go online, but it's not for news, it's other stuff."

What's the average age of your customers, Bernie?

"About 50. Sixty–forty women to men. The men like mysteries, sci–fi, books about war, the women have a much broader taste, everything from books by Dan Brown to Danielle Steele. Biographies are pretty well all women buyers. Anything to do with Princess Diana and Princess Grace are huge sellers."

What will you do in life now?

"I've rented a small apartment on Preston St. I'm looking forward to spending more time with my children and grandchildren, and I'll still keep my computer repair business going, it's something I do on the side. I also ground–train horses out in Manotick. I've always worked with horses. When I grew up on a farm in P.E.I. we didn't have tractors to do the work, only horses."

Will you cry after 6 p.m. Monday, Bernie?

"No. I'll miss my customers. But no." He smiles. "The last time I came close to crying was two years ago when I had to have my my rusted–out 1990 Mercury towed to the wreckers. I couldn't watch. I left it in the lot of Avenues Garage down the street and walked away." KEYWORDS=OTTAWA AND REGION

Harrelson, Stone reunite

SOURCETAG 0710260436
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Entertainment
PAGE: C5
ILLUSTRATION: photo of WOODY HARRELSON
BYLINE: REUTERS
DATELINE: LOS ANGELES
WORD COUNT: 231

Woody Harrelson is reteaming with his Natural Born Killers director Oliver Stone for the Vietnam War drama Pinkville.

Harrelson joins Bruce Willis and Channing Tatum in the United Artists project, which centres on the infamous 1968 My Lai Massacre, in which upward of 500 people — mostly women, children and the elderly — were killed by U.S. soldiers. The massacre ended up being a turning point in the war.

Harrelson will play Col. Henderson, the conflicted officer in charge of the task force that committed the massacre.

Michael Pena, who appeared in Stone's World Trade Center and plays an Army Ranger in Afghanistan in Robert Redford's Lions for Lambs, also has been cast.

Production is set to begin next year, with MGM distributing.

Willis will portray William R. Peers, the Army general who investigated the incident. Tatum will play Hugh Thompson Jr., an Army helicopter pilot who aided the villagers and later testified against the soldiers.

Stone, who served in Vietnam, already revisited the conflict with the films Platoon, Born on the Fourth of July and Heaven and Earth.

MANN 17 AGAIN FOR COMEDY

Leslie Mann, a veteran of Knocked Up and The 40-Year-Old Virgin, will play the wife of High School Musical hunk Zac Efron in the teen comedy 17.

Efron plays a grown man who finds himself back in high school as a 17-year-old. Burr Steers is directing the New Line project.

FOXX EARNS STRIPES IN CRIME DRAMA

Jamie Foxx will play a trailblazing detective in a fact-based drama involving serial killings and racial harassment in the mid-1970s.

The Zebra Murders: A Season of Killing, Racial Madness and Civil Rights reunites Foxx with Matthew Michael Carnahan, the screenwriter of The Kingdom.

Foxx will play Prentice Earl Sanders, one of two black detectives who set out to solve a series of racially motivated serial killings that rocked San Francisco in 1973–74. KEYWORDS=MOVIES

Denmark gives video equipment

SOURCETAG 0710260409
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
ILLUSTRATION: photo of JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER
BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, CP
DATELINE: NOORDWIJK, THE NETHERLANDS
WORD COUNT: 184

When NATO put out a call for more equipment in southern Afghanistan, it was expecting guns and helicopters — not cameras and video—cataloguing gear.

But that's what it got from Denmark: an offer of 1 million euros, or about C\$1.4 million, to buy video equipment that will ultimately be used to deliver documented Taliban outrages to a television near you — or to the popular video website YouTube.

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"Part of that public messaging could be to show to the people — and they can draw their own conclusions — what our opponent, our enemy in Afghanistan, looks like; what they do."

He accused the Taliban of performing "the most horrendous human rights violations."

Two weeks ago, de Hoop Scheffer made a pitch to declassify video surveillance footage shot by NATO forces during the Afghan conflict.

The Danes responded with an initiative to provide equipment to transfer and catalogue existing video taken by the countries involved in fighting the insurgency war. There will also be cameras so that more video can be shot. KEYWORDS=WORLD

CANADA IN AFGHANISTAN

SOURCETAG 0710260408

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.10.26

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A11

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Reuters DETAINED: Pakistanis detained for crossing into Afghanistan illegally sit in an Afghan police station compound in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan yesterday.

BYLINE: CP

WORD COUNT: 220

– The Conservative government in Ottawa was accused yesterday of painting a misleadingly rosy portrait of the situation in Afghanistan that contradicts the view of its own military experts. The Tories say Afghanistan should be stable enough to handle its own security by 2011 — a view reiterated late yesterday by a spokesperson for Prime Minister Stephen Harper. But opposition parties pounced on far less cheerful assessments of the situation from two leading authorities: Canada's top soldier and the head of NATO. The opposition accused Harper of ignoring his own military experts and allies because the truth makes him politically uncomfortable.

– Canada's top military commander has left Afghanistan with a warning that it could take several years before the embattled country is able to fend for itself. Gen. Rick Hillier told reporters that although there is progress being made, Afghanistan is only about half way to the 70,000 soldiers it needs in its army to keep the peace in its country. He said it could take 10 years. Hillier says Canadians don't always see all the complexities involved in rebuilding a country. He said "25 years of destruction" has taken its toll. **KEYWORDS=WORLD**

Afghanistan findings challenged by reader

SOURCETAG 0710260403
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: A10
BYLINE: RICK WILBUR, GRAND BEND
COLUMN: Letters to the Editor
WORD COUNT: 136

I read with interest Licia Corbella's column, Truth surprises CBC (Oct. 24).

If 16 per cent of the 1,600 person CBC/EnviroNics poll sample say it's a bad thing to have foreign troops in their country, then it's hardly like "finding a needle in a haystack."

How was she choosing the people she interviewed? She should have found about 32 who said it was bad and about 48 ambivalent and yet all 200 said they "appreciated our troops being there" and didn't want them to leave." That's neither bad nor ambivalent.

The CBC poll proves her findings as stated in the column to be statistically impossible and much more like finding a needle in a haystack than the CBC reporter finding a citizen who didn't want our troops there. She's either leaving a lot of messages out of the summary or her sampling methods are faulty.

I'm all for fair reporting too, but I don't see it in this rant.

Soldier charged in death Cpl. Matthew Wilcox is charged with manslaughter in the death of a fellow reservist.

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|----------------------|---|
| SOURCETAG | 0710260377 |
| PUBLICATION: | The London Free Press |
| DATE: | 2007.10.26 |
| EDITION: | Final |
| SECTION: | News |
| PAGE: | A1 |
| ILLUSTRATION: | photo of CPL. KEVIN MEGENEY: Was shot to death March 6 of last year in Afghanistan. |
| BYLINE: | ALISON AULD, CP |
| DATELINE: | HALIFAX |
| WORD COUNT: | 476 |

The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said yesterday she feels "very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22-year-old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army-issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time too."

"Today must be a bad day for them, too," Karen Megeney said.

Megeney added she is "right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

Megeney, who was briefed on the charges by military officials at her home yesterday morning, said it's difficult her son's friend is being blamed. "I'm sure it was an accident."

Lt.-Col. Budd Garrick, commanding officer of the military's investigation service, suggested much the same.

"Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide," he said in an interview from Ottawa.

"The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

Garrick said he couldn't release any details of what is alleged to have happened in the incident since the case could go before a court martial in the coming months.

Soldier charged in death Cpl. Matthew Wilcox is charged with manslaughter in the death of a fellow reservist.

Family members have said they're eager for the process to move forward since they still have little insight into what occurred to Megeney, a 25-year-old reservist who was a friend of Wilcox.

"We're just looking at it as another step to finding out the truth," Megeney said from the home where the red-headed soldier was raised. "We don't know anything about what happened that day."

The two soldiers were said to be good friends when they deployed together from their base in central Nova Scotia in December and shared a tent, where Garrick said they were prohibited from carrying loaded weapons.

Megeney's father, Dexter Megeney, said he wants the case to proceed but isn't seeking revenge for the death of his son, who became the 45th Canadian soldier to die there since the Canadian mission began in 2002. Seventy soldiers and one diplomat have died on the mission to date.

"We're letting them do their job," he said of the military prosecutors. "We're not out for blood or anything."

At the time of the incident, the Megeneys received a call from one of their son's friends telling them he had been shot in the chest in what appeared to be a case of friendly fire. Megeney was rushed to the hospital, but died in the operating room.

The decision to lay the charges comes just weeks after the military ordered another Canadian soldier to go before a court martial for similar offences.

Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser will face a military trial on charges of manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in the death of Master Cpl. Jeff Walsh, 33, in Afghanistan on Aug. 9, 2006.

Family members say they were told that Walsh was seated beside the driver of a cramped G-wagon armoured vehicle during a patrol near Kandahar when another soldier's gun discharged inside the vehicle.

KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

The most dangerous job in the world pays \$44,000

IDNUMBER 200710260079
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Business
PAGE: D3
BYLINE: Cassandra Jardine
SOURCE: The London Daily Telegraph
WORD COUNT: 969

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.

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 where he lives in Herefordshire, England, to his four months in southern Iraq in 2004, an experience so "outrageous" that he laughs with incredulity when he thinks back over it.

People take this job for three reasons

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.

"The Arabs are incredibly dignified people, but they take revenge very seriously," he says.

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 that he found his calling. Watching a bomb disposal expert at work he thought: "I could do that."

Long, lonely walks

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, Iraq, 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 neutralizing 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."

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 been paid only \$44,000 a year for a job that meant risking his life daily.

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."

Germany, et al can build image

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PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Forum
PAGE: A10
SOURCE: The StarPhoenix
WORD COUNT: 751

On Nov. 9, 1938, gangs of Nazi youth roamed through Jewish neighbourhoods across Germany, vandalizing and looting businesses and homes, burning synagogues, beating and killing civilians.

The orgy of violence, dubbed Kristallnacht, or "night of broken glass," by Nazi officials, was passively accepted by the German population.

Fifty-one years later to the day, gangs of young Germans armed with hammers, chisels and their bare hands tore down the Berlin Wall — the iconic image of the Iron Curtain that separated Europe into the Communist East and the democratic and liberal West.

The first event is generally accepted as the beginning of the Holocaust while the second is considered the end of the Cold War.

In spite of American claims that it drove the Soviet Union to collapse by forcing it into bankruptcy in the arms race, and Osama bin Laden's equally ridiculous assertion it was al-Qaida and the mujahedeen in Afghanistan that broke the Soviet empire, it was the united western front, represented by NATO and the universal benefits of liberal values as expressed in Germany, that unravelled the Communist regime.

Indeed, throughout its history, Germany often has served as a beacon of liberal values, culture and elevated social thinking. It is ironic, therefore, that more than six decades after the fall of the Nazi regime, Germany continues to identify itself so much with the 12 years Hitler that was in power.

It's impossible to overstate the horror the Nazis unleashed on the world. But the German fixation on this period has made it impossible for what remains the third largest economy in the world to take on its global responsibilities.

And Germany is not alone.

Although those in attendance at a NATO foreign affairs meeting were told this week that nine more countries will offer at least token forces to help carry the load in the more dangerous parts of Afghanistan, member states such as Germany, Italy and Spain are still unwilling to take on greater risk.

Even France, which has offered to help the Dutch who are in the thick of fighting near the Canadian sector, only is willing to provide a handful of military advisers and trainers rather than the boots on the ground that all NATO commanders know are badly needed.

The Dutch are threatening to pull out their troops in August unless others pull their weight. What is holding them back is the knowledge that Afghanistan won't be the only loser if NATO fails to deliver on this UN-mandated mission. The alliance and its ability to protect innocent civilians from Kosovo to Darfur could

be sacrificed.

Chatham House, an influential international think tank in Britain, suggested this week that the Afghan mission was threatened from the beginning by the lack of cohesion among NATO members and the unwillingness by those who did agree to participate to carry out their responsibilities.

Part of the reluctance by some to carry their load was the fear they'd be too closely identified with America's war in Iraq. For others such as Germany, the reluctance was to be seen as an aggressor again.

But the result not only has been to place an unfair and disproportionate amount of the risk and casualties on too few members but to put the mission and NATO itself in imminent danger of failure.

This couldn't come at a worse time.

There is ample evidence that the efforts by soldiers in Afghanistan's south, particularly Canadians, have all but broken the back of the Taliban resistance. Polls indicate that Afghans, including those in the most violent regions, have hope that — if the international community lives up to its commitment — they could once again have peace and security. And some less committed cadres of the loosely organized Taliban are signalling they'd rather talk than fight.

Even in adjacent Pakistan, where al-Qaida and the Taliban have been able to train, recruit and recuperate nearly unmolested, resentment is growing about the violence they bring.

It would be foolhardy to believe that, even if Afghanistan could be pacified and its institutions re-established, that there would be an end to the campaigns of terror emanating from the region.

But as the Brookings Institution's Philip H. Gordon says in his book, *Winning the Right War*, the very values that won the Cold War are what eventually will end the war on terror — a determined and untied front such as NATO, and the demonstrable benefits of liberal and free societies.

Those countries who've carried the load in this NATO mission have, for months, tried to embarrass Germany and other reticent European allies into doing what's right.

Perhaps the only way for them to move past the legacy of 1933 to 1945 is to convince them their destiny doesn't lie in the passivity of Kristallnacht but in the heroism at the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Soldier charged in shooting death

IDNUMBER 200710260021
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Local
PAGE: A9
COLUMN: Canada in Brief
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 108

OTTAWA (CNS) — A Canadian soldier is being charged in the shooting death of his comrade in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a reserve soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., faces one charge each of manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty in the death of Cpl. Ronald Kevin Megeney on March 6.

Megeney, a reserve member of the 1st Battalion Nova Scotia Highlanders, died from a gunshot wound to the chest.

Wilcox is not the only Canadian soldier currently facing charges related to the death of a fellow soldier in Afghanistan.

In March, Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser was charged with one count of manslaughter and one count of negligent performance of duty in the August 2006 death of Master Cpl. Jeffrey Scott Walsh.

Fiddling with foreign aid

IDNUMBER 200710260051
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A14
COLUMN: Susan Riley
BYLINE: Susan Riley
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 875

It is hard to believe something as important as reshaping Canada's foreign aid policy is being driven by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's insanely competitive attitude toward the Liberals, rather than a desire to find out what works.

Yet, there are hints that raw politics is playing a big role in a review of CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency, alluded to by the prime minister in New York two weeks ago. The announcement apparently caught senior CIDA officials off guard and, so far, non-governmental development organizations are in the dark about the scope, direction and timing of the initiative. All Harper has said is that Canada is going to lead by example, not by lecturing the world (presumably like Paul Martin did.) Our aid, he added, needs to be more effective in promoting "Canadian interests and values."

This — and an earlier promise to shift aid focus to Latin America and the Caribbean — has been interpreted in some circles to mean that Canada is giving up fighting poverty in Africa in favour of building trade links with sunglass-sporting Latin American capitalist-commandants. An anecdote circulating in aid circles centres on a development expert who was told recently by PMO officials that "Africa is the Liberals' issue."

But charges that Africa is about to be cut off have been denied by former CIDA minister Josée Verner, who would be keenly aware of the close ties between Quebec and many francophone African recipient countries. Gerry Barr, head of the Canadian Council for International Co-Operation, an umbrella group for development NGOs, agrees "it is wrong to say that abandoning Africa is in the cards." If Harper honours his promise to increase overall foreign aid from around 0.33 per cent of GDP now to 0.42 per cent or better by 2010, he says, there should be enough to continue helping Africa and launch new programs in the southern hemisphere. (This is still far short of the 0.7 per cent goal set by Lester Pearson almost 40 years ago.)

What isn't in dispute is that CIDA is demoralized, dysfunctional and lacking focus. Last March, the Senate foreign affairs committee released an unsparing assessment of the \$12.4 billion the agency has spent in Africa over 40 years: it has done little to reduce poverty, said the senators. And, with 80 per cent of its staff ensconced in Hull headquarters, CIDA is "slow, inflexible and unresponsive" to needs within the countries it serves. In 2006, the C.D. Howe institute called CIDA "overly bureaucratic," noting half of Denmark and Britain's development staff works abroad compared to 20 per cent of CIDA's.

This week, the prestigious Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) criticized the revolving door at the top of CIDA that has seen 11 ministers come and go since 1989.

The Senate committee proposed a radical restructuring: the creation of an Africa office, a Maoist-sounding scheme to pry bureaucrats from their corner offices and afternoon lattes and send them into the dusty fields,

and a redirection of African aid from irredeemably corrupt regimes to countries attempting democratic reforms.

The problem is that the poorest countries are often the most corrupt. It is also needlessly expensive to send CIDA agents abroad if they are duplicating work being done by established agencies like the UN's World Food Program, which currently distributes supplies paid for by Canada in Kandahar.

But there is another imperative at work: visibility. Harper has made it clear Canada will play a prominent role on the international stage — and that its contribution will be noticed. To that end, last spring's budget aims to make Canada among the five largest donors in core countries of interest. However, there is no point in investing if recipient countries — as a recent poll in Afghanistan suggested — don't know their benefactors.

Even if a Maple Leaf on a bag of rice is not immediately relevant to starving people, governments need to prove to Canadians that their help is having an impact. This approach is rooted in Second World War mythology, where the Maple Leaf is associated with freedom by the grateful Dutch.

Because the last government didn't want to go to war in Iraq, Afghanistan has become the major recipient of Canadian aid (\$139 million this year.) It is followed by Haiti (\$104 million), a poor Caribbean nation with ties to Quebec. While Harper is prime minister, these countries will continue to draw heavily. The question is what happens to the other 77 countries we now help — the ones that aren't flavour of the month.

In 2005, Harper and the two other opposition leaders wrote Martin asking him to make poverty alleviation the main goal of foreign aid. This week, a bill that would do just that — a bill rooted in the same frustration with CIDA's failures expressed by the prime minister — is being stalled by Conservative senators. It seems congruent with Harper's views, but there is an insurmountable problem: Its sponsor, MP John MacKay, is a Liberal.

Susan Riley writes Friday, Monday and Wednesday. Reach her at sriley@thecitizen.canwest.com

Obscene amounts of money thrown into war

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PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
BYLINE: Stephen Kravcik
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 252

Re: Canada is 6th in military spending, Oct. 22.

Is anyone else dismayed by the recent reports of the military spending by Canada and the U.S. in the past few years? The annual Canadian defence budget is about \$18 billion; the United States has spent some \$750 billion running its war on terror.

One could question the justification for going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Any improvement in the fortunes of Afghans or Iraqis is debatable; certainly there seems to be more anger and resentment of the West than ever. I'm not so sure that this is money well spent.

Of more concern to me is the lost potential of this money. The mind reels to consider how much good we could have done. The campaign to eradicate polio cost about \$300 million over the 13 years ending in 1979. An intensive vaccination program that eradicated polio from the Caribbean and Central America cost \$120 million some twenty years ago.

Vancouver's Dr. Julio Montaner has calculated that HIV transmission could be halted, leading to HIV eradication, with universal therapy of infected persons. The cost would be about \$330 billion over 35 years.

One can argue endlessly about whether we should be fighting in Afghanistan, or about the motivations of the American government's invasion of Iraq. Morally, though, does it seem right to throw such obscene amounts of money into wars of such questionable benefit when the simple lack of clean water leads to the deaths of 1.6 million children annually?

Stephen Kravcik,

Manotick

Time for NATO to step up, in Afghanistan, Hillier says

IDNUMBER 200710260017
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Gen. Rick Hillier speakswith Canadian soldiers in Kandahar yesterday prior to his departure. Gen. Hillier wants to see more international ground troops in southern Afghanistan, which would help speed progress. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Kelly Cryderman
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen; with files from Agence France–Presseand Reuters
WORD COUNT: 395

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Canada's chief of the defence staff left Afghanistan yesterday calling for more helicopters and military help from NATO members reluctant to work in the country's troubled southern provinces.

Concluding a three–day visit to Kandahar, Gen. Rick Hillier said he would like to see more international ground troops in southern Afghanistan to speed up progress.

"This is a NATO mission and that means it requires all of the NATO countries to do their utmost to be successful," he told reporters.

Lobbying only goes so far, Gen. Hillier said. "You can only put so much pressure on the military commanders. These are decisions that are made by political leaders."

Gen. Hillier's comments came as NATO defence ministers held discussions in the Dutch town of Noordwijk aimed at drumming up troops and equipment to help put down a Taliban–led insurgency in Afghanistan.

It's a source of increasing tension and division among NATO members. The U.S., British, Dutch and Canadian military are carrying the lion's share of the fighting in the most dangerous parts of the country, and want greater participation from some of their more unwilling European allies.

The talks yielded some offers of more resources for the military campaign, but the deployments won't necessarily be in the south. Overall, the offers are unlikely to satisfy the countries carrying the heaviest burden in Afghanistan.

In Ramstein, Germany, U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates yesterday asked Europe's generals to press their political leaders to lift restrictions that stop commanders from sending troops into the most violent areas of Afghanistan.

Mr. Gates, disappointed by allies' failure this week to commit more resources or ease restrictions on the use of their troops, said progress in Afghanistan was fragile and could be lost.

"Simply stated, there are those members who fulfil their commitments, and those who do not," Mr. Gates said, sharply critical of many alliance members following a NATO meeting in the Netherlands.

Gen. Hillier declined to specify which countries should be stepping up, but names including Germany, France, Spain and Italy have often come up.

'We Have Lost, I Think'

Meanwhile in London, the former international envoy to Bosnia–Herzegovina said in comments published yesterday that NATO's role in Afghanistan has essentially been a failure.

"We have lost, I think, and success is now unlikely," Paddy Ashdown told Britain's the Daily Telegraph newspaper, warning that the implications of failure were wider than in Iraq.

"I believe losing in Afghan–istan is worse than losing in Iraq," added the British politician.

"It will mean Pakistan will fall and it will have serious implications internally for the security of our own countries and will instigate a wider Shiite–Sunni war on a grand scale."

Soldier charged with manslaughter

IDNUMBER 200710260016
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
BYLINE: Meagan Fitzpatrick
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 180

A Canadian soldier has been charged in the shooting death of his comrade in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces said yesterday.

Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a reserve soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., faces one charge each of manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death, and negligent performance of duty.

The charges relate to the death of Cpl. Ronald Kevin Megeney, who died March 6, 2007. Cpl. Megeney, 25, from Stellarton, N.S., was in his tent on the base at Kandahar Airfield when he was shot in the chest.

Following the incident, one of Cpl. Megeney's relatives said the family had been told the soldier's death was an apparent accident and the result of friendly fire.

Cpl. Megeney was a reservist with the Nova Scotia Highlanders, who are based in New Glasgow, N.S.

"Based on all evidence collected, ballistic and forensic analysis completed by the CFNIS (Canadian Forces National Investigation Service), Cpl. Megeney was killed by gunfire originating from a weapon allegedly held by Cpl. Wilcox," the Canadian Forces said in a release.

It is not unusual for soldiers to have weapons in their sleeping quarters. Soldiers are required to carry a weapon with them at all times on the base, but accidental discharges are rare.

Bloody clash in Afghanistan 10 Taliban die in coalition strike

SOURCETAG 0710260688
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 22
BYLINE: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 151

U.S.-led coalition and Afghan troops attacked a gathering of Taliban militants in southern Afghanistan, leaving 10 insurgents dead and 14 wounded, an Afghan official said yesterday.

Four Afghan soldiers were also wounded in the attack staged Wednesday evening in the Daychopan district of Zabul province, said district chief Fazel Bari.

The operation was launched after intelligence reports indicated that a Taliban gathering was taking place in the area, Bari said.

Earlier Wednesday, a car bomb exploded near a convoy carrying a provincial governor in eastern Afghanistan, leaving nine people wounded.

Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said that Arsallah Jamal, the governor of Khost province, was unhurt in the blast in Khost city, but five of his bodyguards and four civilians were wounded.

U.S. troops surrounded the area of Wednesday's blast and took the wounded to a hospital at their base near the city, said Gen. Mohammad Ayub, the provincial police chief.

It was at least the third attempt to kill Jamal, who was returning from a visit to districts near the border with Pakistan when he was targeted on Wednesday. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Canadian soldier charged in shooting death of colleague

SOURCETAG 0710260686
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 22
ILLUSTRATION: photo of KEVIN MEGENEY
BYLINE: THE CANADIAN PRESS
DATELINE: HALIFAX
WORD COUNT: 59

A Canadian soldier has been charged in the fatal shooting of a colleague in Afghanistan early this year. Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a reservist from Glace Bay, N.S., is charged with manslaughter.

He's also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Cpl. Kevin Megeney, 25, of New Glasgow, N.S., was killed March 6 while in a tent on the Kandahar air field.
KEYWORDS=CANADA

Afghans far from standing on own

SOURCETAG 0710260681
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 20
ILLUSTRATION: photo of RICK HILLIER Chief of defence staff
BYLINE: BILL GRAVELAND, THE CANADIAN PRESS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 212

An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, Canada's top soldier says. Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation yesterday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check.

VERY COMPLEX

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion — 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

A homeless program that really works

SOURCETAG 0710260659
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 6
BYLINE: GRAHAM HICKS
COLUMN: Hicks on Six
WORD COUNT: 525

TOP FIVE SURPRISES IN PREMIER STELMACH'S STATE-OF-THE-PROVINCE TV ADDRESS

5. Revealed Ted Morton is gay.
4. Told us what the numbers on TV series Lost mean.
3. Will invest additional royalty revenues from next five years in acquiring 1% of Facebook.
2. Wife Marie collapsed halfway through the address, just like Marie Osmond on Dancing with the Stars.

And the #1 surprise in Premier Stelmach's TV time: You can still get a double cheeseburger at McDonald's for only \$1.39!

(Supplied by Magic 99's Rob Christie)

APPLIED ADVOCACY

Here's evidence that a good social program actually WORKS.

The Old Strathcona Adult Outreach – a program galvanized by the growing number of homeless people in and around Whyte Avenue – is four years old.

An initial survey four years ago listed 75 homeless individuals in the neighbourhood.

Four years later, the number is down to 48, and hundreds of individuals have been assisted in finding a real home, getting medical treatment, social assistance, schooling, etc. etc.

Social worker Terry Kettleon works her beat like a neighbourhood cop.

She befriends her people – "average age, 44, choice of addiction, crack cocaine – it used to be booze" – and gains their trust,

She has become their closest ally, helping them get the help they need.

Terry and the project have brought together the two solitudes.

The annual "Old Strathcona Homeless Annual General Meeting" brings the homeless and the rest of the

neighbourhood together over dinner –this year at Calvary Lutheran Church.

It's a chance to meet one another, to talk as equals about concerns of mutual interest.

Rather than "them versus us," it's become "us helping us."

Some Old Strathcona landlords support a damage deposit advance program, allowing Terry's people to pay off a damage deposit at \$20 a month. Others now accept individuals as tenants who were automatically turned down before.

Terry praises the Alberta government's Homelessness & Eviction Prevention Fund. "It's been a big help assisting our folks with the first month rent and damage deposits.

"I think we can say that if individuals are ready (to get off the street) the support is there.

"They might have to move in with strangers, we might have to beg and plead with social services and landlords, but most of the time we can get it done."

IF PAT DANIEL WAS KING

Enbridge (the pipeline people) was tickled pink when president and CEO Pat Daniel was named "Canadian Energy Person of the Year."

This column has time for Enbridge. We even forgive its head office move to Calgary years ago, given Enbridge kept its operating divisions here and is as active in the Edmonton community as in Calgary.

Pat had fun in his speech at a dinner Tuesday, in Edmonton, at the Shaw Conference Centre, with a "10 things we need to change in Canada" list:

10. Create a national vision with strategies in various sectors as to how to get there.

9. Get over regionalization. "I'm so tired of endless delays by local interests when (projects) are in the national interest." (On a local level, are you listening, Cathy Olesen?)

8. Diversify off of resources. "There's only one way and that's through education. All else will follow."

7. Get over being so politically correct as to be neutered. (My word, not Pat's)

6. Be more energy efficient. "We all admit there might be a correlation between greenhouse gases and global warming," he said.

"But the answer is to reduce consumption, not penalize production."

5. Re-work mentorship. "Let the kids mentor you."

4. Stop using "they say" as a sloppy way of passing the buck. "It's an excuse for misinformation."

3. Encourage innovation. "We have a habit of taxing or legislating the spirit out of innovation."

2. Quit pounding on the energy community (industry). "Our prosperity has been built on the availability of cheap energy. And the owners of these companies (through pension funds) are teachers, municipal employees and holders of Registered Educational Savings Plans!

1. "Never mistake endurance for hospitality," and with that, Pat sat down.

Good thing. The food was getting cold!

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

CISN's sure been big on supporting the troops, with a series of "support our troops" free BBQs where the only request was to sign a giant "Support Our Troops in Afghanistan" banner.

Today is the last BBQ, from 3 to 7 p.m., and at 5:30 p.m.

Chris Scheetz will be presenting the banner with 12,000 signatures to Edmonton Garrison base commander Gary Blenkinsop at the Namao Centre Sobeys.

FAB FOUR

Somebody at the Pilgrims Hospice realized the Canadian Tenors had yet to visit Edmonton.

So the Fab Four were the headliners at Voices for Hospice, the society's benefit concert last weekend at the Winspear Centre.

The Canadian Tenors – four handsome fellas with great, great voices and a polished pop/opera stage act – will soon be back.

They'll sell out the Winspear, then the Jubilee, and maybe, like Il Divo, Rexall Place.

And they'll always have a special place in their hearts for the Pilgrims Hospice.

My 16-year-old daughter Salina, a huge Il Divo fan, has a constructive criticism: "They look like Il Divo, they sing like Il Divo, they act like Il Divo. The Canadian Tenors need their own identity."

KEYWORDS=EDMONTON

Letters to the Editor Column

SOURCETAG 0710260516
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 14
COLUMN: Letters to the Editor
WORD COUNT: 681

ED'S AD CAMPAIGN

I had the pleasure of watching the premier's address to Albertans Wednesday night. I cannot thank Ed enough for the most wasted 20 minutes of my life. I tuned in to hear about the future of our province. I, along with everyone else, wanted answers. Schools, how many will be built? Universities, will there be a new one? Health care, how will the crisis be solved? Thank you, Ed, for the pictures of flying geese, running rivers and families with babies. I have been a staunch Conservative supporter but if his idea of giving an address is a 20-minute Conservative ad campaign, I will think twice next time I go to the polls.

Jennifer Windsor-ball

(It should have been titled Uncle Eddie's Feel Good show.)

TRUE PICTURE MUST EMERGE

I just read Licia Corbella's column "Truth surprises CBC" article and was glad to see someone has shed some light on the truth about how Canada is wanted in Afghanistan and the good being done. Finally, a positive view of our efforts over there. I dislike how most news is about the stuff going wrong or mistakes made and it overshadows the good being done and how our military efforts are appreciated by the people there and how they don't support the Taliban. Most media coverage makes NATO look like the bad guys. I want to thank Corbella for doing a good job of showing the positive side of the operation. If the rest of our country could see it and understand, it would become obvious we are needed there.

John Gillis

(More Canadians are catching on.)

REVENUE VERSUS SPENDING

Paul Berton is right about property taxes not generating enough revenue for cities these days, but the other part of the equation is how these taxes are spent. ("Property tax alone won't cut it," Oct. 23.) When city governments stop neglecting essential services and leave unnecessary amenities up to the private sector, they'll soon find there's enough money in the bank. To say hitting city dwellers with another level of taxation without curbs on the scope of city spending is nonsense. The city already collects franchise and other fees tacked on utility bills and a cash cow photo radar system. Fiscal responsibility is the answer, not new taxes which hurt marginal income earners more than the wealthy. Sharpen your pencil, Mr. Berton!

Peter T. Lefaiivre

(Time for more accountability.)

GREED RUNS RAMPANT

The editor's comments that "oil prices are set by world markets" may be true but gasoline prices are definitely not. How is it these committees that check to see if oil companies are gouging us can come to the conclusion all is well with the price of gas set by the oil companies? How is it that with oil at an all-time high we are paying 93 cents a litre for gas and when oil prices were much lower we were paying \$1.15/ litre? How can the price be so dramatically different from station to station, city to city, province to province and most notably country to country? Seems obvious to me greed, corruption, and manipulation by the oil companies runs rampant.

Glen Petersen

(So how do you then account for the "lower" price at the pump.)

VICTIMS LEFT IN LURCH

We sentence a con man who preys on the elderly and cancer victims to eight years only to turn around in less than a year and release him to a halfway house. ("Time for truth in sentencing," Jose Rodriguez, Oct. 25.) Even if he served a third of his sentence before parole qualification he'd stay locked up 2.4 years — twice as long as this parasite spent incarcerated. Where is the notification to potential victims? Is there not a responsibility by the Parole Board to make the public aware of this life-blood-sucking vagabond's impending assault on a vulnerable segment of society? The only reason I could think of not reporting this is embarrassment to the parole system outweighed the need to inform the public. This is confusing to me.

RICK RHEUBOTTOM

(You're not the only one.)

Slain soldier's colleague charged

SOURCETAG 0710260510
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 13
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: HALIFAX
WORD COUNT: 167

The mother of a Canadian soldier who was shot to death by a fellow– reservist in Afghanistan said yesterday she feels "very bad" for the young man who was charged by the military with manslaughter.

Officials with the National Investigation Service said Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, a 22–year–old soldier from Glace Bay, N.S., was also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, who had been in Afghanistan since late last year, was alone in a tent with Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army–issued handgun at the Kandahar Airfield.

Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time, too. Today must be a bad day for them, too, and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Afghans far from standing on own

SOURCETAG 0710260507
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 10
ILLUSTRATION: photo of RICK HILLIER Chief of defence staff
BYLINE: BILL GRAVELAND, CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 212

An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, Canada's top soldier says. Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation yesterday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check.

VERY COMPLEX

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters at Kandahar Airfield.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion — 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

QUOTE OF THE DAY

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072990328

DATE: 2007.10.26

PAGE: A2

BYLINE:

SECTION: News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 34

WORD COUNT: 45

"Obviously, the government of Afghanistan doesn't want to pay militias, and unfortunately there are quite a few of those." Major Alain Veilleux; chief of long-term plans for Joint Task Force Afghanistan.

A20

AFGHAN OFFICERS Troubled police forces now face infiltration by insurgents

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL
IDN: 072990326
DATE: 2007.10.26
PAGE: A20 (ILLUS)
BYLINE: OMAR EL AKKAD
SECTION: International News
EDITION: Metro
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
WORDS: 488
WORD COUNT: 494

OMAR EL AKKAD KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN Afghan insurgents have come up with a simple and effective way to gather information about their Afghan and NATO enemies, according to Canadian soldiers: Pretend to be Afghan police officers, spend some time with the real officers gathering intelligence, and then leave.

The new strategy speaks to the serious and troubling security issues within the Afghan National Police, an organization already rife with corruption, lacking basic equipment and prone to desertion.

None of this would come as a surprise to Canadian Chief of the Defence Staff General Rick Hillier, who at the tail end of a three-day whirlwind tour of Kandahar province, conceded that the Afghan police force is a long way from legitimacy.

"Yes there are many challenges with the police and there's corruption and there's lack of pay and lack of equipment and lack of clothing and all those things," Gen. Hillier said. "But the fact that we've got to help them address those issues is indicative of progress because if [the police] weren't there, we wouldn't have any of those challenges to have to help them meet." Gen. Hillier travelled to a police substation to meet with Afghan officers. He found 10 police officers with three coats to share among them.

Much of the police force's troubles stems from a chronic lack of pay. Major Alain Veilleux, chief of long-term plans for Joint Task Force Afghanistan, said money often goes missing as it travels from Afghanistan's Interior Ministry to the provincial and then district level. The problem is made more severe because in many rural districts, it's not clear which police officers are legitimate and which operate at the pleasure of local warlords, who often offer better wages than the government.

"Obviously, the government of Afghanistan doesn't want to pay militias," Major Veilleux said, "and unfortunately there are quite a few of those." The lack of pay has in turn caused some police officers to set up illegal checkpoints, which allow them to shake down motorists for money.

In response, Canadian mentor teams have started living with Afghan officers at police substations in an effort to reduce corruption.

The plan is working, Major Veilleux said. Illegal checkpoints have been virtually eliminated in many parts of the province, and the Canadians now have some idea just who the real police officers are in the war-torn Zhari and Panjwai districts.

A number of measures have also been taken to deal with problems within the police force. Among them are raising salaries, and making sure the money actually reaches soldiers by having Canadian soldiers in some districts deliver their salaries directly, in cash.

Despite the problems, Gen. Hillier said Afghan police and military officers have come a long way since last year. He pointed to the thousands of villagers who have returned to the Panjwai and Zhari districts as proof the Canadian mission is making progress.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: internal security; police; corruption

THE NATO MISSION Afghans need a decade to build their army: Hillier War-torn country will require long-term help to recruit and train a military capable of handling its own security, Canada's top soldier says

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072990325

DATE: 2007.10.26

PAGE: A20

BYLINE: OMAR EL AKKAD AND ALAN FREEMAN

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN and NOORDWIJK, THE NETH

WORDS: 655

WORD COUNT: 615

OMAR EL AKKAD AND ALAN FREEMAN KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN and NOORDWIJK, THE NETHERLANDS Echoing the sentiments of many of his soldiers in Afghanistan, General Rick Hillier said yesterday it will be a decade before Afghanistan is able to field a professional military capable of managing its own security needs.

"It's going to take 10 years or so just to work through and build an army to whatever the final number that Afghanistan will have, and make them professional and let them meet their security demands here," Canada's chief of defence staff said.

His comments come at a crucial time for Western nations involved in the Afghan mission. Defence ministers from NATO alliance countries are currently in the Netherlands for talks that have largely been dominated by the future of the mission. A rift has formed between those countries actively engaged in the dangerous southern part of Afghanistan and those operating in the far-safer north.

Gen. Hillier is the latest – and most senior – in a string of Canadian military officials who've described Afghanistan's reconstruction as a long-term effort.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," he said.

He also joined a growing chorus of NATO political and military leaders calling on European countries to take a bigger role in the war-torn southern provinces of Afghanistan.

At talks in the Netherlands, Danish Defence Minister Soeren Gade took time to illustrate the problems NATO faces in Afghanistan by referring to a multi-coloured map of the country issued by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, dotted with the flags of the United States, Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany and other prominent members of the 37 nations participating in the 41,000-strong mission.

There's no flag flying over the southwestern province of Nimroz, he pointed out. NATO had plans to station troops there but so far the numbers aren't available.

"You need quite a few thousand soldiers and nobody wants to take the lead and send soldiers," Mr. Gade said in an interview at the end of a two-day meeting of defence ministers from the 26-member alliance at which the Afghan mission was the top agenda item.

The upshot is that the Taliban has free rein in a corner of the country adjacent to the volatile Helmand province where the Danes are serving alongside the British.

Denmark is in the process of ramping up its own force in Helmand to almost 700 from just under 400 and is adding four Leopard 2 tanks, inspired in part by Canada's successful use of tanks in neighbouring Kandahar.

Britain has also ramped up its forces in Helmand to a robust 7,700 as it scales down its operation in Iraq. Denmark, as well, has reduced its force in Iraq to just more than 100.

There are currently fewer than 40,000 Afghan soldiers in the entire country, of which two battalions are stationed in Kandahar. Most estimates of how many Afghan soldiers it will take to maintain security are in the range of 70,000.

Gen. Hillier said it takes about three years to train a single battalion, which normally consists of about 500 to 600 soldiers.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," he said.

On Wednesday, nine countries are reported to have made offers of more troops to the Afghan mission, including four that would be willing to move south, although NATO did not identify them. The immediate concern is the Netherlands, which is threatening to end its presence in Uruzgan province, also in the south, if it doesn't get more burden-sharing.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada; Netherlands

SUBJECT TERM: defence; conferences; reconstruction; foreign policy; statistics

PERSONAL NAME: Rick Hillier

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

THE NATO MISSION Afghans need a decade to build their army: Hillier War-torn country will require long-term

Is this the same alliance that won the Cold War?

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072990283

DATE: 2007.10.26

PAGE: A25

BYLINE: MARCUS GEE

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 747

WORD COUNT: 792

MARCUS GEE When the 21st century dawned, the most successful military alliance of the 20th was adrift. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization had lost its primary purpose – defending Europe from the Soviet menace – when the Cold War ended. Like Britain after it lost its empire, NATO had lost an enemy and had not yet found a role.

Then came 9/11. Within days, the alliance invoked Article 5 of its treaty, which states that any attack on one member will be viewed as an attack on all. NATO supported the U.S. assault on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, sent troops to keep the peace in Kabul in 2003 and took over the international military force in Afghanistan in 2005.

Here, it seemed, was the perfect opportunity for the alliance to prove its continuing worth. The Taliban had been overthrown, but Afghanistan needed help rebuilding its infrastructure and its government while fending off Taliban remnants determined to wreck the effort. NATO had experience in Bosnia and Kosovo in carrying out just such a mission: muscular peace building. If it succeeded, there was bound to be plenty more work like it in a world where terrorism and ethnic conflict had replaced superpower conflict as the main threat to peace.

Better yet, this was not Iraq. The United Nations and the government of Afghanistan had both asked for NATO's help, so there was no dispute over whether its troops had a right to be there. In Afghanistan, NATO could prove both its good intentions (by coming to the aid of a poor and war-torn country) and its military competence (by taking on the Taliban if necessary).

Instead, Afghanistan has proved its Waterloo. When NATO leaders met in the Netherlands this week, the alliance was divided over the Afghanistan mission. Four countries are doing the heavy lifting in Afghanistan's dangerous south: the United States, Britain, Canada and the Netherlands. Others, like Germany and Italy, are patrolling less hazardous parts of the country, their soldiers constrained by "caveats" that prevent them from taking on a combat role.

Feelings are bitter, as they might be. In an alliance that prides itself on burden-sharing and collective action, the parcelling out of danger has been grossly unfair. Canada has suffered 71 deaths, roughly three times the number of much bigger Germany. Britain has had more than 80 killed and the United States nearly 450.

"At the end of this, all NATO countries signed up for this mission," Canada's top military leader, General Rick Hillier, reminded Canada's allies in Kandahar yesterday. Only a handful are coming through.

In Afghanistan, NATO is not only missing a golden opportunity to find a new role for itself, it is betraying the all-for-one, one-for-all tradition that makes it great.

This week's meeting was pathetically typical. Germany, with 3,500 troops in Afghanistan, rebuffed an appeal from the United States to boost its numbers. The Dutch got nowhere with their idea of rotating troops from other NATO countries in and out of Afghanistan's danger zones. Instead of sending more troops where they are needed, the NATO foot-draggers are practically begging Canada and the Netherlands to stay on and keep getting shot at while they hang back for fear of upsetting pacifist public opinion at home. When you take out the 15,000 Americans in ISAF, the other 25 NATO countries have mustered only about 17,000 soldiers, a quarter of the number they deployed in Kosovo at the end of the 1990s.

Several NATO members with military transport helicopters have refused even to lend their choppers to Canada and the other heavy lifters in the south, where they could save lives by carrying soldiers out of their bases without vulnerable road convoys. As the Globe and Mail's Paul Koring reported this week, NATO is being forced to rent helicopters instead. Is this the same alliance that won the Cold War? NATO prevailed in that conflict because it stayed united, shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy. It prevailed because it dug deep and found the vast resources needed to keep the Soviets at bay. Now it cannot even muster a few helicopters to keep its soldiers safe. U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates says he is puzzled why "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." Good question.

mgee@globeandmail.com

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Netherlands

SUBJECT TERM: defence; conferences; strife; foreign policy; war deaths

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; North Atlantic Treaty Organization

DEATH IN KANDAHAR Corporal formally charged in death of Afghan comrade

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072990069

DATE: 2007.10.26

PAGE: A6 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: BRIAN LAGHI

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: STAFF CP

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 385

WORD COUNT: 375

BRIAN LAGHI OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF With a report from The Canadian Press The mother of a reserve soldier killed in a shooting incident in Kandahar says she feels badly for the parents of the Canadian soldier charged in the incident.

Karen Megeney, mother of the late Corporal Kevin Megeney, said yesterday she feels sympathy for both the man charged, Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, and for his parents. Cpl. Wilcox, 22, faces manslaughter and other charges in the death of Ms. Megeney's son, who died of gunshot wounds last March while in a tent on Kandahar Air Field.

"I feel bad for him that he has to go through this, and for his mother and his father," said Ms. Megeney when reached at her home in Stellarton, N.S.

"I guess it's a situation like us with our son. And it must be terrible stress for them. I do feel bad for them." The Canadian Forces National Investigation Service has charged Cpl. Wilcox of Glace Bay, N.S., with three offences, including manslaughter, in the shooting death. Cpl. Wilcox is also charged with one count of criminal negligence causing death and one count of negligent performance of duty.

"Based on all evidence collected, ballistic and forensic analysis completed by [Forces investigators], Cpl. Megeney was killed by gunfire originating from a weapon allegedly held by Cpl. Wilcox," said a news release from the Department of National Defence.

Cpl. Megeney was said to be a friend of Cpl. Wilcox. Ms. Megeney said yesterday that her son occasionally mentioned Cpl. Wilcox when she spoke with him. She said the family will simply have to trust in the justice system.

The two men were deployed together to Kandahar last December and shared a tent.

Cpl. Megeney's name was also raised in the media recently when his death became the subject of a controversial article written by a Canadian doctor, who graphically described the soldier's death from a gunshot wound.

The military has since launched a pair of investigations into the actions of the Canadian doctor, Kevin Patterson. His descriptions of Cpl. Megeney's death appeared in the July–August issue of Mother Jones

magazine, and the Megeney family was unhappy with the depiction, which they viewed as a breach of doctor–patient confidentiality.

Cpl. Wilcox could face life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge of manslaughter.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: manslaughter; criminal negligence

PERSONAL NAME: Kevin Megeney; Matthew Wilcox

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

Peace rally at City Hall tomorrow

IDNUMBER 200710260047
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A18
BYLINE: Doug Brown, Burlington, executive member, HamiltonCoalition to Stop the War
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 287

Re: 'Canada should stay in Afghanistan until 2011: throne speech' (thespec.com, Oct. 16)

In the throne speech Prime Minister Stephen Harper advocated keeping Canadian troops in Afghanistan until 2011, a full two years longer than his government's previous commitment.

To date, the cost of Canada's Afghan war is \$5 billion. But the worst impact is the human toll — 72 Canadians killed, 250 wounded, some seriously.

Numerous Afghan civilians have been killed by our military or turned over, in violation of international law, to torture and disappearance by the Afghan army and police. Our role in the counter-insurgency war has resulted in Afghan villages being destroyed to make the country safe for presidents Mahmoud Karzai and George W. Bush and the multinational oil companies.

The war has also destroyed Canada's international reputation as a peacekeeper and beneficial force in international relations.

Eyewitnesses from Canada attest to the fact that reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan are minimal, the position of Afghan women is deteriorating, opium production is at an all-time high and the overall effect of the counter-insurgency operation there is to turn the Afghan people against their occupiers and to weaken state-building.

Also, Canada's significant military role has allowed the U.S. to free up soldiers and resources for its long-term occupation of Iraq. The war there has so far resulted in one million Iraqi civilian deaths and the loss of almost 4,000 American soldiers.

The Iraq and Afghan wars are parts of a long-term U.S. campaign to extend its control over Middle Eastern and central Asian petroleum resources, under the guise of the so-called "war on terror."

Actually, it is a war of terror against the people of Asia.

Tomorrow people across Canada and the U.S. will demonstrate their opposition to the continuing occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the Hamilton area, we invite all those for peace to rally in front of Hamilton City Hall at 1 p.m. tomorrow to bring the troops home — now.

NATO partners failing NATO

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PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A18
BYLINE: Lee Prokaska
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 532

"There is no such thing as a free ride to peace and security ... It is not about what we are willing to say for a safer and more just world, it ultimately depends on what we are willing to do ... "

— Eimert van Middelkoop, Minister of Defence, the Netherlands

It was a thinly veiled shot directed this week at fellow NATO members who have either been slow and hesitant to step up to the plate or have been absent altogether. The speaker is not Canadian, but the sentiment is certainly one many Canadians will echo.

Van Middelkoop was trying to shame NATO partners into doing more in Afghanistan. Pressure from the Netherlands and Canada has led to a tentative commitment from some nations to increase their troop commitments in the Afghan mission. But NATO allies have ignored Canada's plea for helicopter support, support that could mean the difference between life and death for our soldiers in Afghanistan. There are military helicopters available on the ground in Europe, but they will not be sent to resupply dangerous hot spots in southern Afghanistan. They will not be sent to reduce the number of convoys at risk of roadside bombings, the cause of most Canadian casualties this year.

Do not be sidetracked by the argument, true though it may be, that Canada has not kept pace with its own military equipment needs. That should not be the issue in a discussion of how NATO partners can and should support each other. It's also not particularly relevant to debate Canada's levels of involvement in past NATO missions. The situation right now is relevant; the risks for NATO troops — from Canada and elsewhere — in Afghanistan right now are relevant. Meeting the request is doable and life-saving. Not meeting it is shameful.

The lack of helicopter support from NATO partners has both practical and symbolic fallout. Because allies won't chip in, NATO is left to charter private choppers, with civilian pilots, to fill the gap and save lives. How can Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan feel anything but abandoned by our allies? How can Canadian citizens at home not share that feeling?

The helicopter issue exposes the very marrow of this North Atlantic alliance launched in 1949 to "safeguard the freedom and security of member countries by political and military means." Certainly much has changed since the partners made the initial agreement; the end of the Cold War brought with it a need for clarification and, in some important ways, redefinition of the way in which NATO would carry out its objective of safeguarding freedom and security. Democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and peaceful resolution of

disputes remain core values of the alliance; how to achieve those goals is less clear.

It's not entirely clear whether NATO can even function as an alliance anymore. European governments are under pressure from citizens not to get involved on the ground in Afghanistan and that's understandable. But the refusal to help save the lives of Canadians and other soldiers calls into question NATO's relevance altogether.

Soldier charged with manslaughter

IDNUMBER 200710260025
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A8
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Canadian Press File Photo / Matthew Wilcox fired a single shot from his gun. ;
Photo: Canadian Press File Photo / Kevin Megeney died in a friendly fire shooting. ;
DATELINE: Halifax
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 284

The mother of a Canadian soldier shot to death by a fellow reservist in Afghanistan said she feels "very bad" for the young man charged by the military with manslaughter.

Corporal Matthew Wilcox from Glace Bay, N.S., is also charged with criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty.

Wilcox, 22, was in a tent with Corporal Kevin Megeney, 25, of Stellarton, N.S., on March 6 when a single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm handgun.

Megeney's mother, Karen, said she feels for Wilcox, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders who could face life in prison if convicted of manslaughter.

"We feel very bad for him and his parents," she said. "They're going through a hard time, too. Today must be a bad day for them and I'm right there with them in wishing this had never happened."

She said it's difficult that her son's friend is being blamed, adding: "I'm sure it was an accident."

Lieutenant-Colonel Budd Garrick, commander of the military investigation service, suggested the same. "Obviously, if there was some sort of intent, we would be looking at a different charge, which would be homicide. The facts are that this is a charge of manslaughter and criminal negligence."

The two were said to be good friends when they deployed together from their base in December and shared a tent, where Garrick said they were prohibited from carrying loaded weapons.

Several weeks ago, the military ordered another Canadian soldier to go before a court martial for similar offences. Master Corporal Robbie Fraser is charged in the death of Master Corporal Jeff Walsh, 33, in Afghanistan on Aug. 9, 2006. Family members say they were told that Walsh was seated beside the driver of a cramped G-wagon armoured vehicle during a patrol near Kandahar when another soldier's gun discharged inside the vehicle.

Sacrifices honoured; 10 area soldiers have been recognized for their military service in Afghanistan

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PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.10.26
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Local
PAGE: A6
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: John Rennison, the Hamilton Spectator / Members of the 23rd Service Battalion being honoured for their service in Afghanistan include, from left, Corporal Tristan Blakemore, Corporal Josh Thompson, Sergeant Megan Cassell and Sergeant William Niziol. ;
BYLINE: Daniel Nolan
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 890

Ten local soldiers have been honoured by the City of Hamilton for serving in Afghanistan during the past year.

Eight returned in August and two came back last year. All are members of the 23 Service Battalion, which is based beside HMCS Star on Catharine Street North. The battalion members were involved in resupplying soldiers on operations in Kabul and outside Kandahar. Here are some of their stories.

1. Sergeant Steven Gardiner, 37, Hamilton

Returned home in August after spending six months, two weeks in Kandahar, working as an equipment safety supervisor and a support commander in a small base. The father of three, who had a year off from his Ford job in Oakville, said his work was dangerous but "you couldn't function if you thought about it every day."

His most harrowing moment was having a rocket land about 15 metres away from him in a Forward Operating Base (FOB) 70 kilometres from Kandahar. "That's the one where I went 'Whoa.' No one got hurt. We were very lucky."

His best experience was visiting Kabul and seeing Afghan life, plus the friends he made while overseas. He says the mission is worth it and he doesn't mind the criticism it faces.

"That's what democracy is, but I truly believe we should be there." He'd like to go again, but will wait until his children grow. "It was tough for them for me to be there."

2. Corporal Tristan Blakemore, 23, Oakville

Returned home in August after six months. He worked on resupplying the Royal Canadian Regiment in small field setups and FOBs.

He drove in convoys of three to 50 trucks along roads that were targeted by Taliban fighters and roadside bombs. His truck was hit by rifle fire and he saw an Afghan National Army troop truck hit a roadside bomb.

"No one was killed, but there were injuries."

He said military training prevented him from being scared, but his worst moment was cleaning out a vehicle hit by a bomb. "People were taken out (killed) in it and you could still see blood– stains and there was the smell. That was the hardest part for me."

He says he respects people's right to criticize the mission, but says it is worthwhile and he would volunteer again. "I just wouldn't tell my parents."

3. Sergeant Megan Cassell, 28, of Hamilton

Came back in September after seven months. The full–time reservist, who is engaged, had been deployed to Afghanistan in 2003–04 and was in Bosnia in 2001. This last sojourn, she was in charge of the orderly room at Camp Souter in Kabul, a British base which had 18 Canadians on it. It provided support for truckers, clerks and mechanics, but she went on 40 supply runs around Kabul.

"There is still conflict in Kabul. There's still unrest in Kabul. It is not a safe place."

Her worst experience was a rocket attack on Camp Souter and the convoy runs. While she was worried about roadside bombs, she was also concerned about running someone over. "There were always so many on the road. The streets are very busy."

Her best experience was helping out at a local school and getting to know the female teachers. She also managed to pick up some Dari, a local language. She believes the mission is worthwhile and would volunteer to go back. "I want to spend some time with my family."

4. Corporal Josh Thompson, 25, Dundas

Returned in August after spending six months in Kandahar. His job was to resupply the Lord Strathcona Horse, a tank regiment. His harrowing experiences included having a rocket land about 15 metres from him at an FOB. It killed one man.

He says soldiers are prepared for death in their business, but admitted it was hard and "it sucks." Another experience was when a bomb went off three vehicles ahead of him. "I had a chunk of Toyota come into my vehicle. All of a sudden there was a giant 40–foot wall of flames and you look there and see something that used to be a car."

His best experience was the people he met and says, "I would work again with them in a heartbeat."

He said people are free to criticize the mission, but says no one joins the army against their will. "You join the military knowing you're here to defend our country here or abroad." He would "personally" volunteer again, but says he won't for his family's sake.

"They worried about me. It's more out of respect for my family that I wouldn't be running out to catch the next bus overseas."

5. Sergeant William Niziol, 31, Burlington

Returned a year ago after spending nine months in Kandahar working in the transport administration of the Multi–National Brigade, Headquarters and Signals. This served the armies of such countries as Canada, the United States, Holland, Romania and Estonia. His job was to make sure vehicles were ready to go out on patrols and other duties.

His worst experience was enduring rocket attacks and realizing that some of the soldiers killed in action were people he had known. "You hope it's not going to happen to anyone you know, but you soldier on." He wouldn't name any of them.

His best experience was working "with a great bunch of people," including soldiers from Holland and Britain. "We had to set up a lot of things and everyone worked well. There was that sense of accomplishment."

He believes the mission is making a better life for Afghans and says critics are entitled to their opinion. "I've been asked if I see any good happening there. You see kids playing like kids. That's why you're there so they can have a better life." He would go again. "Friends and family would rather I didn't, but it was what I was trained to do and it's my decision."

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Soldiers' work called 'amazing'; City ceremony honours 10 'peacemakers' who served in Afghanistan

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Ontario's second-highest ranking soldier says the work Canadian soldiers are performing in war-torn Afghanistan is "amazing."

And most of the soldiers would be willing to go back under new deployments, Brigadier-General Gary Stafford said last night at a city ceremony to honour 10 returning Afghan vets.

In what he termed an occasion that is marking a new era for the military, Stafford said the Afghan mission involves Canadians serving not as peacekeepers anymore but as peacemakers.

He acknowledged the controversial mission carries a deadly price and described it as a "challenging, dangerous job," and a burden Canada is willing to shoulder to help Afghanistan become a "self-supporting nation." He said Canadian soldiers understand this.

The general, second in command of the army in Ontario, was guest speaker at a ceremony staged at HMCS Star to honour the vets.

More than 100 people attended and Mayor Fred Eisenberger presented each vet with a special certificate. He also noted the risks in serving in Afghanistan and said the city is proud of those who are serving "our country so courageously."

Those honoured were Major Peter Crow, Warrant Officer Ron Watkins, Sergeant Steven Gardiner, Sergeant William Niziol, Sergeant Richard Paddon, Sergeant Megan Cassell (who was promoted last night from Master Corporal), Corporal Tristan Blakemore, Corporal Daniel Drobotenko, Corporal Dan Grozelle and Corporal Josh Thompson.

Hamilton soldiers will be heading in force to Afghanistan next summer for six months when three Ontario brigades are deployed. This will involve 300 soldiers. Hamilton is part of Brigade 31. Brigade 32 takes in Toronto and Brigade 33 covers Ottawa and northern Ontario. More than 2,900 Canadian military personnel are deployed overseas, with the largest operation being in Afghanistan.

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Hillier has grim view of Aghan security

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CP Wire Bill Graveland KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — An army isn't built overnight and in the case of Afghanistan there's little chance its military will be ready to safeguard national security on its own within the next decade, says Canada's top soldier.

Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, made the observation Thursday as he concluded a three-day whirlwind visit to meet with commanders and troops in the field in war-torn Kandahar province.

His frank assessment may come as a disappointment to those hoping the Afghan army may soon be able to operate on its own and keep Taliban insurgents in check, thus allowing Canadian troops to go home.

"I think most Canadians, living in the incredible country that we have, don't always see all the complexities of trying to rebuild a country and, in some cases, build a country from the 25 years of destruction that took place in Afghanistan," Hillier told reporters.

The Afghan soldiers that have been trained by Canadian and allied forces so far are "top-notch," Hillier said. But he noted it takes about three years to train a single battalion — 500 to 600 troops.

"You just don't build that overnight and the international community will have to be involved for some time to see this through to the final level where you've got a government that works effectively," Hillier said.

After years of work and training, there are about two battalions of Afghan soldiers in Kandahar province. Overall, there's a total of about 38,000 Afghan troops in the country. It may sound good on paper but the number is only about half of what is needed for Afghanistan to provide its own security.

"It's going to take 10 years or so just to work through and build an army to whatever the final number that Afghanistan will have..., " Hillier said.

— The Canadian Press

Turkey pursues Kurdish rebels Could destabilize Iraq's north: U.S.

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CP Wire Christopher Torchia ISTANBUL, Turkey — Turkey warned Thursday that U.S. objections will not stop its troops from crossing into Iraq to pursue Kurdish separatists, while a steady stream of U.S.-made Turkish fighter jets roared across the skies along the border.

High-level Iraqi officials arrived in Turkey as part of frantic efforts to persuade the government not to order an attack on Kurdish guerrilla bases in northern Iraq, and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq sent American diplomats to join the delegation.

Turkey's leaders have been demanding that U.S. and Iraqi authorities stop Turkish Kurd rebels from staging attacks across the frontier, threatening to send in a large-scale offensive if nothing is done soon.

Turkey still seems willing to refrain from a big attack until at least early next month, when it is scheduled to host foreign ministers to discuss Iraq. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is expected to go to Washington afterward for talks with President Bush.

Turkish artillery has been periodically firing across the border, and Turkish television showed video of smoke rising from three villages in northern Iraq that were purportedly hit by shells Thursday.

Dogan news agency, which provided the footage, said there were no casualties because villagers had fled their homes. It did not cite a source.

The army, meanwhile, reported a clash with rebels earlier in the week. It said a "group of terrorists" was spotted preparing an attack near a military outpost in Semdinli province close to Iraq on Tuesday and troops opened fire with tank cannon, artillery and other heavy weapons.

The report on the military's website also increased the official number for rebels killed since Sunday to at least 64.

The rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, denied suffering any casualties and called the military statement a "lie," the pro-Kurdish Firat news agency said.

U.S. officials are urging Turkey not to launch an incursion that could destabilize Iraq's autonomous Kurdish north, the country's most stable region.

But Erdogan said the U.S. desire to protect the north would not hinder Turkey's fight against PKK guerrillas. The rebels use mountain bases in Iraq to rest, train and get supplies in relative safety before returning to Turkey to attack government forces in the heavily Kurdish southeast.

The U.S. administration "might wish that we do not carry out a cross-border offensive, but we make the decision on what we have to do," Erdogan said during a visit to Romania.

"We have taken necessary steps in this struggle so far, and now we are forced to take this step and we will take it," he said.

He said the U.S. should repay Turkish assistance for the invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001 by supporting Turkey's struggle against the Kurdish rebels, who have demanded autonomy and more democratic rights for Kurds in southeastern Turkey.

Erdogan's government is facing growing pressure in his streets to move against the rebels, who have stepped up violence in recent weeks.

Tens of thousands of Turks have joined in demonstrations or attended funerals for slain troops this week to demand tough action after a dozen soldiers were killed and eight went missing in a rebel ambush Sunday.

— The Associated Press