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# Tension with civil service adds to Harper's difficulties

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280117  
**PUBLICATION:** The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Opinion  
**PAGE:** A6  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** JAMES TRAVERS  
**SOURCE:** TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 478

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Stephen Harper's frustration is only one sign of rising tension between Conservative MPs and civil servants. Just two weeks before the prime minister railed privately at resistant bureaucrats, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor publicly embarrassed his top general for a policy failure.

The cases are different in detail. Harper accused headstrong mandarins of opposing recognition of the 1915 murder of some 1.5 million Armenians as genocide while O'Connor said Rick Hillier had failed to ensure families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan are adequately compensated for funeral costs.

But the similarities are deep and instructive. Each probes the relationship essential to the effective operation of intricate government machinery and exposes the pressures now pulling it apart.

In pure theory, non-partisan mandarins advise and elected ministers decide. Equally important, bureaucrats are anonymous while politicians reap the rewards in good times and accept responsibility in bad.

In daily practice, the lines are blurring and the system breaking down. Bureaucrats paid to provide sound policies feel ignored by an ideologically certain cabinet and are understandably angry when held publicly responsible when things go wrong.

It's an accelerating trend, not a new phenomenon. For decades the ruling parties have concentrated power at the centre and made scapegoats of bureaucrats. The Liberals are living proof.

Lest anyone forget, politicians escaped essentially unscathed from the Quebec sponsorship scam and from the human resources grants fiasco while bureaucrats were charged or ridiculed.

Conservatives remain commendably clear of similar scandal. Still, what should have been a supportive partnership has only deteriorated since Harper took a wild pre-election swipe at everyone he considers Liberal hacks.

Much of the trouble tracks to arguably the most insular modern prime minister. Blinded by the beauty of Conservative solutions, Harper relies on his intellectual strength and ideological intuition while closing the door to all but a petite clique of officials, ministers and deputies.

There's more to it than a private, often prickly, personal style. Conflicting pressures squeeze this prime minister between relentless demands for top-down decisions and the equally pressing need to solve problems that sweep across departments.

On a consultant's graph, the prime minister is the high point of the vertical command-and-control axis while the public service spreads across the policy horizontal.

The result, as a new report published Wednesday suggests, is a push-me, pull-you structure failing under impossibly heavy loads.

When that happens, this prime minister bashes the bureaucracy for resisting changes in political direction and his defence minister blames the top soldier.

Rare now, those ugly incidents will increase as stresses mount on a minority government and on bureaucrats struggling to respond innovatively to complexity.

Discipline is a quick fix. Pillorying bureaucrats who can't defend themselves increases resentment and makes it more difficult for those charged with steering and rowing the state to constructively hold a course.

But structural reconstruction is also urgently needed. The critical relationship between politicians and public servants is cracking as Ottawa struggles to make timely, often controversial decisions that overwhelm the capacity and accountability of a system isolated from modern realities and evolving too slowly.

James Travers writes on national issues.

# Your 'Mayday!' had better be on a week day

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280007  
**PUBLICATION:** Times & Transcript (Moncton)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**SECTION:** Opinion  
**PAGE:** D7  
**BYLINE:** Colin Kenny for the times & transcript  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)  
**WORD COUNT:** 919

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If you are a foundering fisherman off the Grand Banks, or a lost child in the Alberta foothills, or a downed pilot in remote territory outside of Yellowknife or a missing boater on the Great Lakes, here is my advice to you:

Do yourself a favour. Wait another five years or so to get in that kind of desperate trouble. Until then, the Government of Canada isn't going to have the kind of resources that it should have in place to rescue you.

One more thing. Don't go missing outside office hours.

Canada's current search-and-rescue operations tend to go a bit limp on the weekends and in the evenings. Urgency takes a breather in the interests of dollars and cents.

Canada can be an unforgiving country for those who go missing. Much of our terrain is rough, remote and seemingly endless. Our waters can be wild and frigid. This is a country whose history is dotted with dramatic search and rescue efforts — some successful, some not.

We need an effective, robust search-and-rescue capacity, and the current government's Canada First military strategy should be assuring us that we have one. It isn't.

Even this government's Liberal predecessors — notoriously parsimonious when it came to military spending — recognized that Canadians need an effective Search and Rescue capacity and in 2003 declared its upgrade a priority. Unfortunately that government didn't approve the purchase of needed replacement fixed wing aircraft before it left office. The project was still in limbo when an election was called.

Priorities don't disappear when governments change — or shouldn't. The Fixed Wing Search and Rescue Aircraft Project seemed to be in very good hands when the Conservatives announced during the campaign that the heart of their military policy would be "Canada First."

If there is anything that is "Canada First", it is maintaining a capable Search and Rescue capacity for its citizens and others visiting the country.

But then the new government expanded Canada's commitment in Afghanistan, which has turned out to be a much more expensive proposition than it expected. While the government did so without renouncing its promise to revitalize Canada's neglected overall military capacity, it has not coughed up the money to both fight a foreign war and rebuild the Canadian Forces with a focus on home defence.

As a result — shhh!! — the Canada First policy has become a Canada Second policy, perhaps for the next five years, perhaps for much longer.

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor has ordered a review of Canada's Search and Rescue capacity in the wake of growing doubts about the government's claims that Canada will not run short of fixed wing aircraft to provide adequate Search and Rescue.

Fixed wing aircraft are essential to Search and Rescue. They can go farther and faster than helicopters and keep the situation in hand while helicopters, ships or ground vehicles are en route.

Most of the fixed wing aircraft the Canadian Forces has been using for Search and Rescue in recent years --- Buffaloes and Hercules --- are old. The Buffaloes working in the mountains of western Canada might have five years left in them, with increased unavailability for duty due to more onerous servicing needs. Six of the fleet of 32 aging Hercules have already been grounded.

The Conservative government announced the purchases of 17 new Hercules in June 2006, but these will initially be needed in Afghanistan and will not be available for Search and Rescue in Canada until our commitment in Afghanistan ends in 2010 --- if it does end then.

The government claims it will make more of the current fleet of ungrounded Hercules available for Search and Rescue by purchasing C17s and C130Js for moving troops and equipment over long distances, an argument that has a degree of truth to it.

But those Hercules are going to require more and more maintenance --- like the infamous Sea King Helicopters that spent many hours in the shop for every hour they spent in the air.

Meanwhile, skimping on Search and Rescue makes responses to potential tragedies more dangerous on weekends. While search-and-rescue squadrons must be ready to fly within 30 minutes of any emergency during daytime working hours from Monday to Friday, the maximum response time is two hours in the evening hours and on weekends.

The Canadian Press recently reported that the Department of National Defence has estimated that as much as \$2 billion would have to be added to DND's budget to ensure a 30-minute response capacity around the clock, seven days a week.

That's a lot of money, but nobody ever pretended that a genuine Canada First defence policy would come cheap.

Plus a Canada Second defence policy could turn out to be very expensive in terms of lives lost close to home. Air Force Capt. Jim Hutcheson acknowledges that the review of Canada's Search and Rescue capacity has been triggered by some inadequate responses in recent years: "There have been a couple of search-and-rescue incidents in the last few years that warrant us to take another close look at our (search-and-rescue) posture."

Three years ago, for instance, two fishermen were lost when a trawler capsized off Cape Bonavista, Nfld. --- at 6.15 p.m., during Search and Rescue off hours.

"To me, every minute was critical because if they would have got there sooner, they could've done more," Ken Ryan, of St. John's, whose two brothers died in the tragedy, told Canadian Press.

Canada needs a well-equipped military to support its troops in Afghanistan. It also needs a well-equipped military to protect Canadians at home.

Sooner or later, a Canadian government is going to have to recognize that we Canadians are spending far less on our military capacity than most other reasonable mid-sized countries.

Your 'Mayday!' had better be on a week day

At home or abroad, there is a price to pay for that.

n Senator Colin Kenny is Chair of the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. He can be reached via e-mail at [kennyco@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:kennyco@sen.parl.gc.ca)

# Men in uniform play for the troops

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280044  
**PUBLICATION:** The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**SECTION:** Sports  
**PAGE:** B1  
**BYLINE:** BILL HUNT hunt.bill@dailygleaner.com  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)  
**WORD COUNT:** 832

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The men in uniform at Royals Field Friday night are doing their bit to support our men in uniform in Afghanistan.

The Fredericton Peterbilt DQ Royals will host "Support Our Troops" Night Friday, with a portion of each ticket sold, and proceeds from the sale of Support Our Troops merchandise on sale at the front gate to be donated to the Military Family Resource Centre at CFB Gaagetown.

One of the Royals' own, pitcher/shortstop Steve McCarty is with the 2RCR Battlegroup 42 Engineer Squadron in Afghanistan. He's currently on 18 days leave, but is spending the time in Toronto with his wife Christine and four-year-old daughter Jaylen before he returns to Afghanistan to finish his tour. Royals are hoping his mother Cathy will be on hand Friday night at 7:30 p.m. to throw out the ceremonial first pitch before they take the field against the Saint John Alpines.

First things first: Royals are in Chatham tonight to face the Boston Pizza Ironmen. The Ironmen have won three in a row to improve their third place record to 7-4 on the season. The Royals, of course, are rolling along atop the New Brunswick circuit with a 13-3 record, although they're coming off their first home loss of the season, an 8-6 loss to the Dartmouth Moosehead Premium Dry of Nova Scotia last Saturday.

The Royals are hoping there's a big crowd on hand Friday in what will be their final home appearance before Canada Day.

The first 500 fans in attendance will get a photo of the human Canadian flag that was taken before the troops deployed to Afghanistan. The Royals had hoped to bring a couple of busloads of soldiers in to help celebrate the evening, but the logistics are difficult.

"So we'll do it in the playoffs," said Royals slugger Jody Peterson, who is a close friend of McCarty's and has done much of the work behind the scenes to help put Friday evening together.

"It's our way of honouring and saying thank you to Steve and all of our troops," said Peterson. The league adopted a resolution at a preseason meeting that will allow McCarty to play in the playoffs regardless of whether or not he's back in time to make an appearance with the Royals in the regular season, and Peterson says that, if McCarty wants to play when he returns, he's more than welcome to do so.

"Absolutely," said Peterson, who hears from McCarty fairly regularly and in fact, took a call from him in the dugout at Royals Field one Saturday afternoon during a game. "If he's available and wants to play, we'll certainly be glad to have him."

Peterson has been a big part of the Royals' success this season, with a league high five home runs and a .462 batting average which is second only to Tom Burns of Chatham.

"I feel really good," said Peterson, who broke in with the Royals in 1999 and has a career total of 58 home runs – and counting. "I'm part of a pretty good batting order, with lots of good hitters around me, so I'm seeing a few more pitches to hit this year."

To his credit, he's hitting them – thanks in large part to "a pretty rigorous training program," he undertook in the off season. He said he was in the gym, sometimes as many as five or six times a week, from October on, and the statistics show it.

"I just thought that, going away to nationals this year with our own team, and, on paper, having a good chance to win it, I wanted to be ready," said Peterson. "I'm not getting any younger, and every year, kids are coming in at 22 and they're such good players!"

Peterson has already carved out a pretty good career as his eighth season in senior colours carries on: his 15 home runs in 2002 are good for a share of the league record with former Royal Kelvin Hoyt (1990) and Saint John's Colin Ring (1998). He won the league's Triple Crown in 2002, and won two-thirds of it last year, with eight home runs and 26 RBI. Teammate Dave Barr won the batting crown with a .426 stick last year.

Peterson has no plans to pack it in any time soon.

"As long as I'm competitive and can still run and field and throw," he said. "I'm hoping for another two or three or four years."

He admits he'd like to get a chance to play with Fredericton native Matt Stairs on Baseball Hill. Like most everyone in local baseball circles, Peterson has heard the rumour that, if and when Stairs returns to Fredericton, he'll play at least one season for the Royals.

"It would be an honour," to play with him, said Peterson. "Matt has a lot of friends around, of course, and you hear the rumour that he's going to be back in a year or two and he might play. But the way he's going this year and the success he's having, he's probably bought himself another two or three years at least."

The 39-year-old Stairs, of course, has turned into a valuable player for the Toronto Blue Jays, playing the outfield and first base and hitting 12 home runs and driving in 28 to date this season.

# Kingstonians show support for troops; Memory book bound for Afghanistan following cross-country tour

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<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)
<b>DATE:</b>	2007.06.28
<b>SECTION:</b>	Local news
<b>PAGE:</b>	3
<b>BYLINE:</b>	Lisa Jemison
<b>PHOTO:</b>	Harrison Smith/For The Whig-Standard
<b>ILLUSTRATION:</b>	Master Cpl. Renay Groves, who began the book project, shows some pages to Kingston Mayor Harvey Rosen. The book is comprised of signatures and messages from people across Canada for the troops in Afghanistan.
<b>WORD COUNT:</b>	563

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When she goes to Afghanistan in September, Master Corp. Renay Groves will bring with her a book filled with thousands of notes of support and appreciation to share with soldiers.

Last fall, Groves started Notes from Home, a memory book full of messages from Canadians to soldiers overseas, by sitting with a blank book at a grocery store in Barrhaven, asking passers-by to write messages to send to the troops.

She stopped in Kingston today as part of a cross-country tour of 17 Canadian cities, each with a major army base. After spending the morning at CFB Kingston, Groves set up a book-signing station in Confederation Park. Throughout the afternoon, a steady stream of people came to sign the book and show their support for the troops in Afghanistan.

Jan Singleton was one of the first to stop by Confederation Park yesterday.

"I decided to sign the book because my dad was in the First Canadian Parachute Battalion and he just passed away," she said.

Her father was always asking about how "our boys" were doing overseas, and Singleton said he would have wanted to sign the book himself.

"I think it's wonderful what they're doing," she said of the troops in Afghanistan. "It's the hardest job and I really respect them."

She said she has two former students who are currently serving in Afghanistan.

"One has been back and over again. She said it's nothing like she could have ever imagined."

After picking up their marriage licence, Liz Murray and her fiance crossed the street to Confederation Park to sign the book.

"He just got back from Afghanistan two weeks ago," Murray said of her fiance, so they wanted to show support for his colleagues and friends still there.

Murray said she signed the book, saying "thank you for all your hard work, and come back safe."

Kingstonians show support for troops; Memory book bound for Afghanistan following cross-country tour

Sentiments of gratitude and good wishes were a common message among the many notes.

Art Woodhouse, who worked at CFB Kingston for a couple years, said he thinks the book is a great idea to show the troops the support they have back home.

"Keep up the good job, guys, and come home soon," he wrote. As of Tuesday night, the book contained more than 9,000 notes.

When she's finished the cross-country tour, Groves said, she doubts there will be any book in Canada with a larger collection of signatures.

Once in Afghanistan, the book will travel around to different units before being kept in Canada House in Kandahar.

Currently circulating amongst the troops in Afghanistan is a similar book – Notes from Afghanistan – filled with messages from troops to their friends, families and supporters at home.

It will be sent to Ottawa and will eventually be placed beside Notes from Home in the Canadian War Museum.

After having individuals approach her and tell her how much they support the troops, Groves said, she decided to start Notes from Home because the soldiers in Afghanistan "need to hear what I hear and what everyone else hears."

A lady from the grocery store where Groves started with the book told Pierre Poilievre, MP for Nepean–Carleton, about the book, and he stopped by the store one day in January.

"He said, 'I've got to get this to the Prime Minister,'" Groves said.

Four days later, Groves stood on Parliament Hill as Stephen Harper signed the book, thanking and congratulating the troops for their service.

Chief of National Defence General Rick Hillier, who also signed the book, was the driving force behind the cross-country tour, Groves said, adding that he wanted it hand-carried so that it was safe.

Groves has also started several similar initiatives, including distributing "Tour Diaries" among troops. The small books, the perfect size to fit in uniform pockets, are for soldiers to record thoughts and memories about their time in the service.

"Future generations will know and understand if you take the time to write it down," she said. Although she'd like to see the diaries passed down in the soldiers' family, Groves said the last page of each book has a note requesting that, if the diaries ever need a home, they be sent to the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

"I guarantee you we'll see some come back," Groves said.

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# Parliamentary session 'dysfunctional': MP

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.06.28

**SECTION:** The Province

**PAGE:** A5

**WORD COUNT:** 152

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Charlottetown MP Shawn Murphy said Tuesday that the past Parliamentary session was at best dysfunctional.

"The Stephen Harper Conservatives have totally lost their way and must return with an agenda that speaks to the issues of all Canadians," said Murphy.

"I find it troubling that Prime Minister Harper is offside the Canadian people on so many important issues. Whether it is the environment, the Afghanistan mission, or economic management, to mention but a few, the prime minister is out of step with ordinary Canadians."

Murphy said the Opposition parties have succeeded in making real progress for Canadians in the last session.

He cited the government's slashing of the Summer Career Placement Program. Thousands of students were without summer employment and thousands of non-profit organizations were without resources to carry on their programs. The Tories were forced to reinstate funding after pressure from Opposition parties and non-profit organizations. The House resumes sitting on Monday, September 17.

# Prime ministerial power stifles decision-making

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280167  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** Opinion  
**PAGE:** AA08  
**ILLUSTRATION:** TOM HANSON CP File photo Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to seek consensus on the Afghan mission was an abrupt break with a decade-long trend. ;  
**BYLINE:** David Eaves and Taylor Owen  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 738

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Last week Prime Minister Stephen Harper boldly reversed his position and proposed that the renewal of the Afghan mission be contingent on cross-party consensus.

If, however, the Prime Minister is serious about developing an Afghan consensus, he will need to radically rethink how foreign policy is developed in Canada. For more than a decade, the creation of foreign policy has become more opaque and less discussed as it shifted from Parliament, ministers and mandarins to the advisers in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Jean Chretien's decision to pursue Kyoto – without an implementation plan – and to stay out of Iraq – without a strategy for managing the U.S. relationship – occurred with minimal parliamentary or even cabinet debate.

Paul Martin's decision to move forces to Kandahar was made without widespread public discussion or parliamentary approval. More recently, Harper's China strategy was formulated in isolation and ignored the wisdom and experience of the Department of Foreign Affairs on the issue.

This trend has profound policy implications. In each case, a closed and unilateral approach produced poor outcomes: We've failed to meet our Kyoto targets, relations with the U.S. are poor, the counter-insurgency mission in Kandahar is struggling and Chinese engagement is at a new low.

With the lessons of closed decision-making increasingly clear, the Prime Minister's decision to seek consensus on the Afghan mission should be embraced by all Canadians. However, building this consensus needs to begin today, not in 2009, and the PMO must lead the way. To put force behind his proposal, the Prime Minister could take several simple steps.

First, the PMO should release an uncensored version of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's report on prisoner abuse. When Parliament last tried to investigate, the government sought to prevent witnesses from testifying to the ethics committee.

When witnesses finally arrived, Conservative MPs walked out of the committee, effectively shutting it down. Canadian democracy relies on Parliament's powers of investigation and oversight. Allowing Parliament to perform its function would go a long way to signal the Prime Minister's commitment.

Second, the minister of defence, responsible for military operations in Afghanistan, must be allowed to answer questions about the mission in the House of Commons. Gordon O'Connor's rare responses during Question Period have been reduced to short dismissive statements, and his relations with the press are highly restricted.

An accountable and effective policy debate is impossible if the mission's key leader – the minister of defence – is silenced.

Finally, the PMO should release its grip on government bureaucrats working the Afghanistan file. Astonishingly, the PMO must clear all communications and policies relating to Afghanistan – effectively shutting out input from policy experts both within and outside government.

While controlling a debate is often confused with leadership, nothing could be further from the truth. When it comes to our country's most important policy decisions, such as the war in Afghanistan, the government must draw on the collective wisdom of the whole country, not simply the ideas of a handful of PMO staffers.

This means allowing government to interact openly with those it represents. There are numerous emerging networks, particularly in the academic community, that the government could draw upon for collaboration on the Afghan mission. Send them the signal that they have a partner in Ottawa.

In short, Canadians will look to their Prime Minister to reach out and engage everyone, even those who disagree with him, to become a consensus builder.

Brian Mulroney, another Conservative prime minister, demonstrated such leadership during the first Gulf War. Recognizing the gravity and sensitivity of the situation, he invited the opposition leaders – even those who'd openly opposed the war – into his cabinet. He even deputized Audrey McLaughlin into the Privy Council so she could read classified information.

Disagreements persisted, but the debate shifted from being partisan to solution-oriented. At the moment, few could imagine Harper opening up the cabinet discussion to Jack Layton, Stéphane Dion and Gilles Duceppe. The current implausibility of such a suggestion is the canary in the coal mine of the Prime Minister's proposed new, open foreign policy debate.

If Prime Minister Harper is serious about developing an Afghan consensus, he will need to start now, not in 2009.

David Eaves is a frequent speaker and consultant on public policy and negotiation. Taylor Owen, is a doctoral student and Trudeau Scholar at the University of Oxford.

# Stresses mount for bureaucrats

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280165  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Met  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A21  
**BYLINE:** James Travers  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 493

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That's an accelerating trend, not a new phenomenon. For decades ruling parties concentrated power at the centre and made scapegoats of bureaucrats. Liberals are living proof. Lest anyone forget, politicians escaped essentially unscathed from the Quebec sponsorship scam and from the human resources grants fiasco while bureaucrats were charged or ridiculed.

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Much of the trouble tracks to arguably the most insular modern prime minister. Blinded by the beauty of Conservative solutions, Harper relies on his intellectual strength and ideological intuition while closing the door to all but a clique of officials, ministers and deputies.

There's more to it than a private, often prickly, personal style. Conflicting pressures squeeze the Prime Minister between relentless demands for top-down decisions and the equally pressing need to solve problems that sweep across departments.

On a consultant's graph, the prime minister is the high point of the vertical command-and-control axis, while

the public service spreads across the horizontal policy axis. The result is a push-me, pull-you structure failing under impossibly heavy loads.

When that happens, this prime minister bashes the bureaucracy for resisting changes in political direction and his defence minister blames the top soldier. Rare now, those ugly incidents will increase as stresses mount on a minority government and on bureaucrats struggling to respond innovatively to complexity.

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But structural reconstruction is also urgently needed. The critical relationship between politicians and public servants is cracking as Ottawa struggles to make timely, often controversial decisions that overwhelm the capacity and accountability of a system that is isolated from modern realities and evolving too slowly.

James Travers' national affairs column appears Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

# Global support for mission drops, poll says; Survey of 47 nations, including Canada, finds many want NATO troops to pull out of Afghanistan

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280113

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star

**DATE:** 2007.06.28

**EDITION:** Met

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** A23

**ILLUSTRATION:** Master Corporal Kevin Paul DND Soldiers from the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery practise firing their howitzer at at Sperwan Ghar, Afghanistan. ;

**BYLINE:** Tim Harper

**SOURCE:** Toronto Star

**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation

**WORD COUNT:** 322

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A survey of people in 47 nations shows growing support for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, with calls for a pullout coming from a majority of NATO nations.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project found majorities in 32 of the 47 countries and territories wanted the troops out of Afghanistan – with Canadians and most other nations that have troops on the ground split on the issue.

The poll, released here yesterday, also showed widespread distrust of the United States and global lack of confidence in U.S. President George W. Bush, but also distrust of other powers, including Russia and China.

It also found a huge jump in the number of people around the world who cite global warming as the major threat to the world. Most point the finger at the U. S. as the cause of environmental problems.

Pew polled 45,239 respondents in 46 nations and the Palestinian territories. The Canadian sample – with a 4 per cent margin of error – was 1,004 respondents, contacted by phone during April.

Forty–nine per cent of Canadians told Pew they wanted their troops out of Afghanistan.

Former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright, co–chair of the Pew project, said she found the dwindling support for the Afghanistan mission to be a surprise.

"Most people I have heard from say, 'Well, we shouldn't have been in Iraq, but we certainly have a reason to be in Afghanistan,'" she said.

In the U.S., there has been a double–digit increase in those who say environmental problems are a major global threat – from 23 per cent to 37 per cent – since the last major Pew global study in 2002.

But still, the fear of global warming in the U.S. is lower than in any other advanced industrial country.

In Canada, 54 per cent of respondents told Pew they felt environmental degradation was the top global threat.

In 34 of the 37 countries where the question was asked, the U.S. was named as the country hurting the world's environment the most.

Canada's view of the U.S. has fallen since a U.S. State Department poll after the 9/11 attacks found 72 per cent of Canadians viewed the U.S. favourably.

That number is down to 55 per cent, said Pew, but is higher than in European nations, such as Britain (51 per cent), France (39 per cent) and Germany (30 per cent).

# Put a price on human life? You bet

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280051  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A02  
**BYLINE:** Slinger  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 513

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"Afghan life is not cheap, and it should not be treated as such."

That's Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai complaining about the more than 90 Afghan civilians killed by Western troops in the last two weeks.

To which I can only reply, "Not so fast, there, Mr. President."

While it is too early to say about their hearts and minds, we are definitely taking a lot more civilian lives – men, women and children – than the Taliban.

The latest totals for 2007, according to the Associated Press, are 210–plus killed by NATO and U.S. troops, while the Taliban have accounted for something under 180.

Whether these lives were cheap, however, along with exactly how cheap is set out in the International Index of Human Worth, which the UN updates regularly to take into account things like whether a particular nation has finally decided that rape is a crime, and how far each citizen lives (on average) from a McDonald's.

For a while I thought it was clever of our leaders to arrange to fight their wars in other people's countries. I assumed it was nothing more than their desire to keep their own civilians out of the line of fire. That it was good politics.

Now I discover that what they actually base their decisions on is the Human Worth Index (discover this for yourself at [humanworth.un.org](http://humanworth.un.org)).

It's good business.

Would the world lose more if collateral damage took out an Italian rather than a Serbian? What about an Australian?

Is it good business to ignore whether citizens have access to digital cable?

Or whether they cook a parasite–infested goat over an open fire and eat it with bare hands, spreading who knows what diseases?

In the index, the value of lives is correlated to the U.S. dollar, with the most valuable, for the sake of simplicity, equalling \$1. And the most valuable life (number of Hummers per family; how many more wars

their leaders can undertake, all at once, in foreign lands than anybody else; etc.), unsurprisingly, is an American's.

Lately, what with our dollar rising to par with theirs, Canadian lives have also risen to par.

A British life is worth 74 cents. If it were just plain English, it would be 95 cents. Leave the Scots out and each life in the United Kingdom would be valued at 93 cents. Factor the Scots in and it plunges to 74.

Despite appearances, Scandinavian lives average out to 75 cents each because so many of them are inclined to suicide. How a nation's citizens value their own lives counts for something.

And appearances do matter. When a nation sends its troops to fight in some other nation where it is impossible for the visiting warriors to tell the local "friendlies" from "scumbags" (e.g. Hutus and Tutsis), a single value is given to the whole kit and caboodle. In Rwanda's case, 16 cents. Interestingly, that's the value assigned to Iraqi lives, given that it's still impossible for the Coalition of the Willing to distinguish Shiite from Sunni.

(Al Qaeda is unranked because it incorporates many nationalities, and is actually an international organization, like the Kiwanis Club.)

Now I hate to be the one to break it to Hamid Karzai, but the current value of an Afghan life is 22 cents, although this is likely inflated because none of the troops fighting there, including Canada's 2,500, have any idea why they're fighting there, and prefer to give the Afghans the benefit of the doubt.

One thing is for sure. If Karzai doesn't pipe down, neither his, nor any other Afghan life, will be worth a nickel.

Slinger's column appears Tuesday and Thursday

# Suicide car bomber hits troops in Kabul

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280112  
**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A11  
**COLUMN:** World Briefing  
**DATELINE:** KABUL, Afghanistan  
**SOURCE:** Reuters  
**WORD COUNT:** 81

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KABUL, Afghanistan — A suicide car bomber hit a vehicle carrying foreign troops in the Afghan capital today, causing some casualties, a police official said.

The attack happened on a road leading east out of the city, but further details were not immediately available.

A spokesman for NATO said he was aware of the blast, which took place on a busy road used daily by foreign troops.

Kabul has witnessed a series of suicide attacks by Taliban this year. A suspected Taliban suicide bomber killed more than 20 police in the heart of the city on May 17.

# Canadians ignore plight of child soldier Omar Khadr

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280105  
**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Comment  
**PAGE:** A12  
**COLUMN:** Janet Bagnall  
**BYLINE:** Janet Bagnall  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 540

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Because they're small and easy to push around, children make good soldiers, if by good one means cheap and expendable.

As many as 200,000 to 300,000 minors around the world are forced to sweep for land mines, carry supplies or blow themselves up in suicide missions, according to Human Rights Watch.

In Afghanistan, a bewildered six-year-old boy recently was found by coalition forces with an explosives vest draped on him.

The child told soldiers he didn't know why he had to wear the vest, the Guardian newspaper reported.

An important step toward ending the immoral practice of conscripting children into armed conflict was taken last week with the conviction, the first by an international court, of three military leaders from Sierra Leone.

Among the 11 counts of war crimes of which the men were found guilty was the recruitment of children to fight in an armed conflict.

The ruling was hailed as a milestone.

"This verdict is a very concrete demonstration of criminal prohibition of the conscription of child soldiers," said Jo Becker, children's rights advocacy director at Human Rights Watch, in an interview with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting.

"These prosecutions are a major step toward bringing justice to hundreds of thousands of children worldwide."

With the possible exception of Omar Khadr.

Canadians like to think they are on the side of the angels.

We oppose the use of child soldiers. We sign onto one international law after another, including ratifying in 2000 the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The protocol upholds the right of ex-child soldiers to be treated humanely and as minors, not to be imprisoned or otherwise punished for involuntary participation in a conflict.

Yet when it comes to the one Canadian citizen to whom all of this legal protection and presumed sympathy might apply, we leave him to rot for five years in an illegal prison — on the expedient grounds that it is run by a major ally, the United States, and besides, we don't like the boy's family.

Neither of these objections qualifies as principled.

Omar Khadr has been held in Guantanamo prison since 2002, the year he was accused at age 15 of having thrown a grenade in a battle between Taliban and U.S. forces in Afghanistan. An American medic died as a result.

Omar had been sent to Afghanistan by his father, Ahmed Said Khadr, an Egyptian-born Canadian who worked as a senior deputy to Osama bin Laden. The older Khadr was killed in 2003 by Pakistani forces.

Kept incommunicado in Guantanamo, Omar Khadr has not told his side of the story.

His brother, Abdurahman Khadr, however, talked about his and his brother's upbringing in a CBC interview.

"The first time I went to training I was 11 years old," Abdurahman told Terence McKenna. "My brother was 12 ... We took ... the assault rifles course.

"Two times," Abdurahman continued, "my father himself tried to get me to become a suicide bomber."

The pressure was significant. "He sat me down with the al-Qaeda scholar, he sat me down with the person to train people to become suicide bombers," said Abdurahman.

"He's like, you know, you'd be our pride in this family, you'd be our pride if you do this."

Had his U.S. military trial gone ahead, Omar Khadr would have been the first child tried for war crimes in the world, according to Brookings Institution scholar Peter Singer, quoted in a news report.

Even in Sierra Leone, the most notorious country in the world for its use of child soldiers, children do not face war-crimes charges; instead they appear before a truth-and-reconciliation commission.

In Canada, groups ranging from civil-liberties advocates to opposition politicians have lobbied to have Omar Khadr returned to Canada.

This week, they were joined by his U.S. military legal defence team.

In a published report, U.S. Lieutenant-Commander William Kuebler said Canadian officials "have given the United States the benefit of the doubt long enough ... the Canadian government has been noteworthy for its silence."

And so has the Canadian public. Either we believe in rule of law, or we don't.

If we do, we should demand Omar Khadr be brought home, to Canada.

# Parade honours local hero

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280022  
**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Go!  
**PAGE:** D6  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Debra Brash, Times Colonist / Patrick Tower was the first Canadian to receive the Star of Military Valour. ;  
**BYLINE:** Leah Collins  
**SOURCE:** Times Colonist  
**WORD COUNT:** 397

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Last summer Sgt. Patrick Tower

wasn't watching fireworks or cutting red-and-white cake. He showed his dedication to his country in a much more extraordinary way — saving the lives of his comrades during a Taliban ambush.

Tower is the parade marshal for Sidney's Canada Day festivities. He's the first Canadian awarded the Star of Military Valour, an honour created in 1993 and second only to the Victoria Cross.

Tower is what his father, retired soldier Bob Tower, describes as an army brat. He grew up all over, bouncing from Nova Scotia to Germany to mainland B.C. It's Vancouver Island, though, that he calls home. His parents have lived in North Saanich since the 34-year-old's high school days.

Though now stationed in Edmonton, in August 2006 Tower was in the Pashmul region of Afghanistan dodging a torrent of bullets and grenades. An unexpected strike against his platoon killed or injured many. Among the fallen was Tower's best friend.

Despite the ambush, Tower persisted in his platoon's mission to bring assistance to a nearby school. He led a medic and a third soldier across 150 metres of exposed terrain, bullets and rockets chasing them to their destination. When he got there, he learned his commander had fallen. Tower took charge and led those remaining to safety.

"It epitomizes what it's all about to be a Canadian in a lot of ways," says Judy Reimche, spokesperson for the Peninsula Celebration Society, which is organizing Sidney's Canada Day events. When her planning committee learned Tower had roots in the area, they wanted the chance to honour him in their own way.

During festivities Saturday night, Tower will be presented a plaque that he will dedicate in memory of Canada's fallen soldiers. The plaque will be installed in the park outside the Sidney Pier Hotel. Tower will also kick off fireworks June 30 at Sidney Waterfront and will lead the Canada Day parade the following morning at 11.

Bob Tower, when asked if he would be at the celebrations, replied with a voice reverberating with paternal pride "Oh, definitely."

He hopes his son's presence at Sidney's Canada Day reminds those attending of the many people, like his son, who have dedicated themselves to serving the country.

"I think it's very important because the majority of the Canadian civilian population, up until Afghanistan they didn't even know we had a military, half of them," he says. "And I think it's very important that he sets an example for the military, and educates people on what's happening in the world."

# Almost a tiny human bomb

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**SOURCETAG** 0706271109

**PUBLICATION:** The Winnipeg Sun

**DATE:** 2007.06.26

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 2

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by Musadeq Sadeq, AP Juma Gul, 6, knew the vest Taliban militants wanted him to wear contained a bomb. They told him it would spray flowers at American troops when he pressed a button.

**BYLINE:** JASON STRAZIUSO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

**DATELINE:** FORWARD OPERATING BASE THUNDER, Afghanistan

**WORD COUNT:** 215

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An Afghan boy says Taliban militants put a vest packed with explosives on him in a bid to trick the 6-year-old into being a suicide bomber.

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Juma said that sometime last month Taliban fighters forced him to wear a vest they said would spray out flowers when he touched a button. He said they told him that when he saw American soldiers, "throw your body at them."

The militants cornered Juma in a Taliban-controlled district in southern Afghanistan's Ghazni province. Their target was an impoverished youngster being raised by an older sister — but also one who proved too street-smart for their plan.

"When they first put the vest on my body I didn't know what to think, but then I felt the bomb," Juma told The Associated Press as he ate lamb and rice after being introduced to the elders at this joint U.S.– Afghan base in Ghazni. "After I figured out it was a bomb, I went to the Afghan soldiers for help."

While Juma's story could not be independently verified, local government leaders backed his account and the U.S. and NATO military missions said they believed his story.

# Harper finally catching up to public opinion on Afghanistan; PM realizes unpopular mission becoming too costly politically

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280123  
**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Opinion  
**PAGE:** A16  
**KEYWORDS:** PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Steven Staples  
**SOURCE:** Freelance  
**WORD COUNT:** 841

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OTTAWA – He wore his poker face right up until the last day of Parliament, but by the end of the week Stephen Harper showed his cards: The war in Afghanistan is ending for Canada.

The prime minister told reporters last Friday that "this mission will end in February 2009." In the press conference he sounded subdued, resigned to the fact that despite using all of the government's resources to build support for the war, two-thirds of Canadians still want it to end in 2009.

He blamed the opposition, saying that he will put the decision to extend the mission to a vote, but he wants a "consensus" in Parliament first because he doesn't want to "send people into a mission if the opposition is going to, at home, undercut the work."

This was a very different Stephen Harper than the one who only weeks ago shouted across the floor of the House of Commons that the opposition parties cared more about the Taliban than our troops when they raised concerns about the possible torture of former detainees. Surely, that was the lowest point of the debate.

The truth is that Harper has caught up with most Canadians — he has reached his tipping point.

Harper now realizes that his embrace of the war effort is too costly politically for him and his party. The war that he made an unofficial cornerstone of his government turned out to be a millstone instead, grinding away at his popular support.

First, casualties are rising too quickly. Canada has lost 52 soldiers since moving to Kandahar 16 months ago, compared to only eight deaths in the entire preceding four years. Add to this hundreds of serious injuries, and the human toll is staggering for such a small force of 2,500 troops.

Second, our share of the load is excessive. Canada accepted too much of the burden in NATO by taking on a three-year deployment in the most dangerous part of the country. Canada's fatalities account for almost one-third of all non-U.S. deaths, even though Canada supplies one-tenth of the troops contributed by U.S. allies.

Third, there are few signs of the progress that Canadians have waited six years to see. Despite reams of nice-sounding statistics quoted by government officials, it's obvious that Afghanistan's problems are too deeply rooted. What's worse, the battle for hearts and minds is being lost to corruption, lack of aid and civilian deaths caused by NATO air strikes.

Two events of last week are a metaphor for Canada's war efforts. In a painful lesson, three soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb placed in an area thought to be safely under our control. Meanwhile, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer came to Ottawa to urge Canada to fight on beyond 2009, but made no promises of help from other NATO members.

Now that Harper has opened the door an inch for a change in Canada's military role in Afghanistan, there will be tremendous pressure to kick that door wide open. Calls for action will only intensify when more casualties are incurred while fighting a mission that the government has already lowered the curtain on.

If there is a consensus among opposition parties, as the prime minister puts it, they will want the government to notify NATO that the bulk of the Canadian troops, which are currently involved in a counter-insurgency combat role, will be moved out of Kandahar province by February 2009 — or sooner, if the NDP has its way.

As a sop to NATO, opposition parties would likely agree to some of the soldiers in the battle group being redeployed elsewhere in Afghanistan, along the same lines as Canada's uncontroversial peace support mission in Kabul before 2006.

It may also be acceptable to opposition parties to leave behind a few hundred troops in the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team to train Afghan forces.

At home, it will be impossible for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor to oversee the demise of the mission that he so strongly, if ineffectively, defended on behalf of the government.

His handling of the war, especially the treatment of detainees, is a factor in the prime minister's grudging acceptance that the mission must end. A change in defence minister will have to accompany the change in government policy.

In a broader context, Harper's remarks last week may signal that the current military buildup and transformation of the Canadian Forces from peacekeepers to war fighters has reached its zenith.

The war has been used to justify an increase of billions in military spending, a reorganization of the Forces to better fight the U.S.-led "war on terror," and more than \$20-billion in planned equipment purchases.

The Liberals and NDP have already called for a freeze on new major military contracts until the federal auditor general reports on the government's non-competitive procurement process in the fall.

With the war all but over, what support will there be for billions of dollars worth of tanks and helicopters intended for Afghanistan?

The Canadian public has never been comfortable with the U.S.-friendly shifts in Canadian foreign policy that Afghanistan has been used to defend, and now they will want our government to be doing what Canadians have always supported — participating in United Nations peacekeeping missions and paying more attention to diplomacy and aid.

That's probably the best news of all.

Steven Staples is director of the Rideau Institute on International Affairs and a board member of the Canadian

Pugwash Group.

# Body armour generates big money for Quebec's Stedfast Inc.; Personal protection equipment firm's lifeblood

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280020  
**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Business  
**PAGE:** E11  
**DATELINE:** MONTREAL  
**BYLINE:** Mike King  
**SOURCE:** Montreal Gazette; CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 384

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MONTREAL – An Eastern Townships company that rose to the top of the rubberized–fabrics market in the early 1990s, then struggled to survive at the beginning of the new millennium, has bounced back to become a leading developer of body armour for military personnel and first responders.

Rob Kellock, CEO of Stedfast Inc., said personal protection equipment now accounts for more than 75 per cent of company's \$27 million in annual sales.

"We are now a leader in flexible barrier materials (used in protective clothing)" Kellock said Wednesday from Stedfast's headquarters in Granby, Que., where the firm was founded in 1930.

Stedfast recently landed an \$850,000 contract from the Department of National Defence to come up with enhanced personal protection for soldiers in Afghanistan against improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

According to the department's website, 20 of the 60 soldiers killed in Afghanistan between April 2002 and last week died from IED attacks.

Kellock said Stedfast's track record with the military and first responders — police, firefighters, ambulance technicians and emergency medical assistants — made the latest contract "a natural for us to go after."

As well, Stedfast's breathable textiles have already been used by other manufacturers to make tents and uniforms for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. And the same material is used to make protective gear for other uses where there's a need for breathable clothing that's both functional and can repel germs, flames or water.

Originally owned by the Stedfast Rubber Co. of Boston, the company was a supplier to the shoe, bookbinding and travel–bag sectors. It transformed itself into a specialized manufacturer of high–tech fabrics after it was bought by a group of Canadian investors in 1979.

The company is moving away from what Kellock called "cut and sew" partners who assemble products from Stedfast materials to doing more manufacturing of their own.

Francois Simard, vice–president of research and development, said RDis still "a very small part of our business — five to 10 per cent — but growing."

With the increasing number of military contracts alone, mostly from Canada but also from the United States and the United Kingdom, Stedfast is leaving behind what Kellock referred to as "the challenging period we went through from 2000 to 2002."

He recalled the company was "spending a lot of money on RDand not bringing much in" during that time.

Stedfast now has more than 100 employees in Granby and at it's Charlotte, N.C., facility that specializes in a key component in seals, gaskets and roofing membranes.

# Letters to the Editor Column

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**SOURCETAG** 0706280469  
**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** 10  
**COLUMN:** Letters to the Editor  
**WORD COUNT:** 553

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Cheers to Mindelle Jacobs for hitting the nail on the head. Chris Benoit, burn in hell. If he wants to off himself, go ahead. But don't take your family with you. There is truly a huge problem with our society when we honour people like this. If anyone else had done this, it would have been thought of as a horrendous act and we wouldn't have tried to point out the good things about that person.

Andrew Gilberds

(It's an unbelievable tragedy.)

I fail to understand Mr. Benoit's actions. I never would have dreamed he was abusive because he was so quiet when the cameras were going. It sounds like the devil did go down to Georgia and did find a soul to steal.

Brad Nichols

(And rocked the wrestling world.)

To the people expressing sorrow over the demise of Chris Benoit. Would you say the same thing if the professional wrestler was unknown to you? Mindelle Jacobs accurately labeled Benoit as a murderer, rather than a fallen hero. It is Benoit's family that deserves our sorrow.

Mark Patterson

(Absolutely.)

Yes, Chris was an awesome performer. But killing his family was wrong on so many levels. And saying that 'roids probably were the cause is also wrong. Other wrestlers have used steroids and gone through divorces and other personal turmoil and never killed their spouses or children. Mayor Mandel wants to wait and see how to mark Benoit's death. He lost the right to be honoured when he murdered his wife and seven-year-old helpless son.

Perry Delbridge

(Public homage would be inappropriate.)

I don't think we should be too judgmental about what Chris Benoit did. It doesn't look like it was done in anger. It seems like he gave it a lot of thought, what with leaving a Bible beside his wife and child. He must have been a very tormented man to think this was the only way out.

M. Eastman

(We'll never know.)

City council is sitting backwards on the horse again trying to deal with panhandlers. Go after the contributors! They're the ones keeping panhandlers around. People who give to panhandlers also have the means to pay a fine. If a panhandler's source of income dries up, he will move on. One or two of them might even try working for a living!

Neil MacDonald

(Many of them are addicts.)

The Edmonton Police Service is responsible for increasing illegal firearms trade each time it frees suspects in exchange for illegal guns. All the bad guys will do is load up on illegal guns so that they can negotiate their way out of criminal charges. I don't think that the gun control lobby had this in mind. We have enough laws that clamp down on the good guys. How about some to stop the bad ones?

Bob Campbell

(Good idea.)

Re: Wednesday's story, "smokes make troops targets." Oh, the irony. Take choice away from the men and women who keep us free. I wonder how smoking compares to a tour through Afghanistan as far as personal health goes? We seemed to win both world wars with our soldiers able to choose to smoke or not. If you are willing to give up your life for your country, your country could at least allow you the privilege of personal choice.

Brad Scott

(Another tobacco war.)

Re: Wal-mart reducing packaging. Great. Now how about more cashiers so we don't have to stand like insulted sheep?

Prosper Theroux

(Do sheep get insulted?)

We welcome letters. Be brief.

# Almost a tiny human bomb

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**SOURCETAG** 0706271108

**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun

**DATE:** 2007.06.26

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 2

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by Musadeq Sadeq, AP Juma Gul, 6, knew the vest Taliban militants wanted him to wear contained a bomb. They told him it would spray flowers at American troops when he pressed a button.

**BYLINE:** JASON STRAZIUSO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

**DATELINE:** FORWARD OPERATING BASE THUNDER, Afghanistan

**WORD COUNT:** 215

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An Afghan boy says Taliban militants put a vest packed with explosives on him in a bid to trick the 6-year-old into being a suicide bomber.

The account from Juma Gul, a dirt-caked child who collects scrap metal for money, provoked tears and anger at a meeting of tribal leaders and left American soldiers dumbfounded. Afghan troops crowded around the boy to call him a hero.

Juma said that sometime last month Taliban fighters forced him to wear a vest they said would spray out flowers when he touched a button. He said they told him that when he saw American soldiers, "throw your body at them."

The militants cornered Juma in a Taliban-controlled district in southern Afghanistan's Ghazni province. Their target was an impoverished youngster being raised by an older sister — but also one who proved too street-smart for their plan.

"When they first put the vest on my body I didn't know what to think, but then I felt the bomb," Juma told The Associated Press as he ate lamb and rice after being introduced to the elders at this joint U.S.– Afghan base in Ghazni. "After I figured out it was a bomb, I went to the Afghan soldiers for help."

While Juma's story could not be independently verified, local government leaders backed his account and the U.S. and NATO military missions said they believed his story.

# Suicide blast kills foreigners

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**SOURCETAG** 0706280381  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 22  
**BYLINE:** AP  
**DATELINE:** KABUL, Afghanistan  
**WORD COUNT:** 71

---

A suicide car bomber hit a NATO convoy in the Afghan capital today, killing two foreigners and wounding three others, a police officer said.

The bomber also wounded two Afghan civilians in the attack in eastern Kabul, said Najibullah Samsur, a local police chief. He could not say whether the foreign victims were soldiers or contractors working for NATO.

NATO confirmed there was an explosion near one of its convoys but provided no details on any casualties.  
KEYWORDS=WORLD

# Almost a tiny human bomb

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**SOURCETAG** 0706271107

**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun

**DATE:** 2007.06.26

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 2

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by Musadeq Sadeq, AP Juma Gul, 6, knew the vest Taliban militants wanted him to wear contained a bomb. They told him it would spray flowers at American troops when he pressed a button.

**BYLINE:** JASON STRAZIUSO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

**DATELINE:** FORWARD OPERATING BASE THUNDER, Afghanistan

**WORD COUNT:** 215

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# Afghan police weak link in chain

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280076  
**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Forum  
**PAGE:** A10  
**COLUMN:** Don Martin  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR  
**BYLINE:** Don Martin  
**SOURCE:** Calgary Herald  
**WORD COUNT:** 669

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KANDAHAR — The Afghan police captain sat dabbing off forehead sweat in his sauna-like office while negotiating with Canadian soldiers and police constables melting in full battle dress.

It was hell — and not just because the ripped curtain behind his desk failed to block the blinding sunlight in Sunday's 48-degree heat. This is enforcement Hades, a pathetic display of tool-less Afghan officers flailing and failing to enforce law in a lawless land.

Capt. Mohammed Magood Rhanani's office walls had numerous white boards devoid of writing. There was no telephone, Internet connection, fax machine or any device that would extend communications beyond shouting distance.

Outside his unsigned police "station" was parked the only marked "police" vehicle — a filthy Honda motorcycle. Out back, facing the mountains where the Taliban roam, the only weapon was a rusting piece of Russian artillery.

A total of 16 heavily armed Canadian soldiers with two police constables and this columnist had driven armoured RG-31 vehicles for almost an hour through dangerous territory to see how they could help the district commander of this 64-member police force.

A key part of the military's provincial reconstruction team is to upgrade local police efficiency and effectiveness, so the constables took out their notepads to see what the captain needed from Canada to do his job properly. The list seemed obvious — and endless.

The police captain demanded more guns. His small cache of AK-47s just wasn't up to the task. No can do, Medicine Hat Const. Gerald Boucher shrugged. Against military policy and, besides, weapons issued to police "officers" have been known to mysteriously end up in Taliban hands.

Rhanani requested vehicles because, after all, one motorcycle is not enough. Sorry, that's up to Afghanistan National Police headquarters to sort out, our police responded. A wired perimeter fence perhaps? Const. Charles Reddick of Nova Scotia nodded, took out his pad and made a notation. That would go into the report as a Canadian recommendation to Afghan authorities.

There are six checkpoints under Rhanani's command, but no way to communicate among any of them except an unreliable cell signal, no way to give chase if suspicious types make a run for it, no computer system to track what bad guy is where doing what.

Policing is clearly the Achilles heel of this region's quest for peace, order and quasi-decent government — and perhaps Canada's most pressing unfinished business if it leaves Afghanistan in 2009, when the mission mandate expires.

"Police are still looked at with much suspicion by our soldiers because they are a long way from being a professional police force," Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier told me last month.

One glimpse at their state of ineffectiveness is all you need to confirm Hillier's view. While Afghanistan's national military is progressing from a band of misfits into something resembling an army, its police forces are still grossly underequipped and underpaid, and thus ineffective and corrupt.

A Kandahar cop, who is a marked man for murder as far as the Taliban are concerned, makes about \$70 US a month — if or when he gets paid. It costs about \$140 a month to rent an apartment in Kandahar City. The only way to make ends meet is to demand bribes and collect graft, which defeats the goal of creating legitimate law enforcement.

Boucher insists progress is being made on policing and that Canada's recommendations carry weight in the national headquarters.

"The Afghanistan police need some guidance as far as getting this done, but they need so much it's a bit like trying to drink out of a fire hose," says Boucher. "We're making progress, but we're not here to do the job for them. In the end, it's up to them."

Whether Canada can offer significant lasting assistance is open to cynical speculation. Taking notes and dutifully filing reports that may or may not receive any attention inside the Afghanistan chain of command is a frustrating and seemingly hopeless way of adding local muscle to law enforcement.

But getting away with breaking the law in southern Afghanistan today is as simple as outrunning a small motorcycle which, one station officer told me, probably wouldn't even start.

# Bring Canada's troops home to guard North against U.S.

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280065  
**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Forum  
**PAGE:** A11  
**BYLINE:** E. J. Smith  
**SOURCE:** The StarPhoenix  
**WORD COUNT:** 137

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The head of NATO compares Canada's troops in Afghanistan with troops who willingly signed up for service in the Second World War.

Of course, our men and women in the world war volunteered to fight the Nazis who were killing our families in Europe. In the process of freeing the Europeans, our troops also managed to liberate his country -- Holland.

Apart from a small number of immigrants, we have no connections to Afghanistan. Our troops are there because the United States invaded Afghanistan. Canada is committed until February 2009 but that commitment should not be extended.

A small number, perhaps around 800, could remain in the north to help non-government organizations with reconstruction. The rest should be returned to Canada where some of them can help in our North to prevent the U.S. from taking over our Arctic land and sea.

E. J. Smith

Saskatoon

# Afghan parliament's actions mock notions of democracy

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280062  
**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Forum  
**PAGE:** A11  
**BYLINE:** Bob Fink  
**SOURCE:** The StarPhoenix  
**WORD COUNT:** 160

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The planned deployment of more Canadian troops to Afghanistan raises questions about the worth of Canada's mission there, and for whom and what these soldiers will be risking their lives.

Insight to answers comes from Malalai Joya, elected member of the Afghan parliament. Returning from an international tour, she denounced the parliament as being run by warlords, opium growers and drug dealers, and vowed to continue her fight against their murderous and criminal activities.

For that, the Afghan parliament suspended Joya for three years and ordered the high court to file a case against her. Parliament also confined her movements within Afghanistan, "while terrorists and human rights violators in the parliament were provided immunity before any court for their past crimes," notes the defence committee for Joya.

So much for free speech and the democracy that NATO, George Bush and Stephen Harper claim to defend as they continue to place more young soldiers in harm's way.

Bob Fink

Saskatoon

# If justice is to be done

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 071790199

**DATE:** 2007.06.28

**PAGE:** A20

**BYLINE:** DON KOSSICK

**SECTION:** Letter to the Edit

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** Saskatoon SK

**WORDS:** 78

**WORD COUNT:** 94

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Don Kossick Saskatoon The limitations on the military inquiry into the handover of Afghan detainees is discouraging if any justice is to be done (Critics Urge Wider Mandate For Afghan Detainee Probe – June 27).

In the U.S., the higher chain of command tried to contain the investigations and avoid responsibility for the atrocities at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Is a similar scenario being played out here by our chain of command, which reaches right to our Defence Minister?

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:inquiries; human rights; prisoners

# FEDERAL POLITICS: CABINET SHUFFLE 'I'm not resigning,' defiant O'Connor insists Despite discontent among Ottawa Tories over his handling of Afghanistan, Defence Minister stands his ground

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 071790116

**DATE:** 2007.06.28

**PAGE:** A4

**BYLINE:** ALAN FREEMAN AND CAMPBELL CLARK

**SECTION:** National News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** KINGSTON, OTTAWA

**WORDS:** 748

**WORD COUNT:** 748

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ALAN FREEMAN AND CAMPBELL CLARK With a report from Gloria Galloway in Ottawa KINGSTON, OTTAWA A defiant Gordon O'Connor said yesterday he has no intention of quitting as Defence Minister, and warned his critics not to assume he is about to be turfed from the portfolio in a widely expected cabinet shuffle.

"I can assure you of one thing: I'm not retiring and I'm not resigning," Mr. O'Connor told reporters at a military conference in Kingston.

"And if you want to run a pool, go ahead. You're going to lose." The minister told the conference he expects to deliver the government's long-awaited policy paper, which will include elements of the government's current policy in support of the Afghanistan mission, by the end of the summer.

Mr. O'Connor has been at the centre of weeks of speculation about a cabinet shuffle, as many Ottawa Conservatives argue he is not the best figure to sell the combat mission in Afghanistan or to devise an exit strategy.

Many believe Mr. O'Connor, 68, will not run in the next federal election, and his public slip-ups have made him a less credible salesman at a time when finding the right tone on the Afghan mission may have a major effect on the government's political fortunes, especially in Quebec.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper refused to respond last week when he was asked about a potential realignment of the cabinet and whether it would involve Mr. O'Connor. But neither did Mr. Harper jump to express continued confidence in his Defence Minister, who has been criticized for his handling of several files, including the treatment of detainees and the payment of funeral costs for soldiers killed in the line of duty.

Mr. O'Connor came to the defence of the Afghan mission in his speech yesterday to the conference on "stability operations," insisting the Afghan army was making such great strides that he could foresee the day when it could take over much of the combat mission now being handled by Canada's 2,500 troops based in Kandahar.

Yet at the same time, Mr. O'Connor was blunt in his assessment of the long-term prospects for Afghanistan, using the kind of unsubtle language that has got him into political hot water before. "Afghanistan has always

been a land of instability," he said in response to a conference questioner, adding later, that "I think the area is always going to be unstable." He said the security situation along the border with Pakistan remains difficult to police, in part because there are millions of ethnic Pashtuns in both countries. "There is a steady stream of insurgents coming across the border," he said.

Later, he tried to temper those comments when asked about them by reporters. "What I'm saying is that Afghanistan is in an unstable region and there will always be challenges to Afghanistan. Our job and NATO's job is to try and create a state that is stable enough to handle its own affairs so it can govern efficiently." "But if you run back 2,000 years of history in Afghanistan, they'll always be challenged by outsiders." Several Conservatives said they expect a cabinet shuffle to come soon, so that Mr. Harper can realign his cabinet team in the quiet summer months, long before they face the fire of the Commons in September.

Two senior cabinet members, Industry Minister Maxime Bernier and Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day, have been touted as the most likely successors to Mr. O'Connor at Defence.

Mr. Bernier's name has been cited by Conservatives who believe a Quebec minister would make the best spokesman for the mission when the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment deploys to Kandahar.

Mr. Day, meanwhile, is seen by many Tories as a surprise success because he has avoided major public pitfalls in a portfolio plagued with tricky issues and bad news, including a spate of RCMP controversies.

Most believe that Mr. Harper intends to make only small adjustments to his cabinet team, possibly shifting Mr. O'Connor to oversee spending plans at Treasury Board, and then moving current Treasury Board President Vic Toews out of his six-month purgatory there to replace Mr. Day at Public Safety.

But some Conservatives said they believe Mr. Harper's office is struggling with a decision over whether to make major changes to their governing style, as the Conservatives shift from believing they would last only 12 months in power to thinking they could govern for three years.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; defence; foreign policy; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Gordon O'Connor

ORGANIZATION NAME: Conservative Party of Canada

# The West just doesn't get it

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280116  
**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
**PAGE:** A20  
**BYLINE:** Ross Smyth  
**SOURCE:** The Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 60

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Re: "Prisoner release promised" (Gazette, June 26).

This is not a very significant move to peace. It covers only the Fatah prisoners and not the Hamas ones.

Such progress is false unless the West makes much greater effort to be fair to both sides in the Middle East and in Afghanistan.

We in the West have many experts who know how to start conflicts, but not how to stop them. Media editorials should champion true peace and justice.

Ross Smyth

Montreal

# It's not about women, it's about Osama

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280111  
**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
**PAGE:** A20  
**BYLINE:** Bill Parker  
**SOURCE:** The Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 88

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Richard Marcogliese is a "perfect example" (Letters, June 27) of people who seem to think that Canadian politicians woke up one morning and thought to themselves: "Gee, those Afghan women sure are oppressed, let's invade Afghanistan."

In fact, our original mission was to help get Osama bin Laden (remember him?) and his Al-Qa'ida cronies.

It would be interesting to know if Marcogliese advocates using the Canadian army to attack all the countries in the world where women are oppressed, because the list is a very long one.

By the way, what ever happened to Osama bin Laden?

Bill Parker

Val des Lacs

# Body armour business helps Stedfast bounce back from the brink; Developing protection for Afghanistan troops

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280102

**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette

**DATE:** 2007.06.28

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Business

**PAGE:** B1 / BREAK

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: TYREL FEATHERSTONE THE GAZETTE / Rob Kellock, president and CEO of Stedfast, with some final protection products at the plant in Granby. ;

**BYLINE:** MIKE KING

**SOURCE:** The Gazette

**WORD COUNT:** 386

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An Eastern Townships company that rose to the top of the rubberized fabrics market in the early 1990s, then struggled to survive at the beginning of the new millennium, has bounced back to become a developer of body armour for military personnel.

Rob Kellock, chief executive officer of Stedfast Inc., said personal protection equipment now accounts for more than 75 per cent of company's \$27 million in annual sales.

"We are now a leader in flexible barrier materials (used in protective clothing)" Kellock said yesterday from Stedfast's headquarters in Granby, where the firm was founded in 1930.

Stedfast recently landed an \$850,000 contract from the Department of National Defence to come up with enhanced personal protection for soldiers in Afghanistan against improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

According to the department's website, 20 of the 60 soldiers killed in Afghanistan between April 2002 and last week died in IED attacks or roadside bombings.

Kellock said Stedfast's track record with the military and first responders – police, firefighters, ambulance technicians and emergency medical assistants – made the latest contract "a natural for us to go after."

As well, Stedfast's breathable textiles have already been used by other manufacturers to make tents and uniforms for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. And the same material is used to make protective gear for other uses where there's a need for breathable clothing that's both functional and can repel germs, flames or water.

Originally owned by the Stedfast Rubber Co. of Boston, the plant was a supplier to the shoe, bookbinding and travel-bag sectors

It transformed itself into a specialized manufacturer of high-tech fabrics after it was bought by a group of Canadian investors in 1979.

The company is moving away from what Kellock called "cut and sew" partners who assemble products from Stedfast materials to doing more manufacturing of their own.

Francois Simard, vice-president of research and development, said RDis still "a very small part of our business – 5 to 10 per cent – but growing."

The 12-member RDteam is getting more involved in prototypes and next-generation personal protection equipment, Simard added.

With the increasing number of military contracts alone, mostly from the Defence Department, but also from the U.S. and Britain, Stedfast is leaving behind what Kellock referred to as "the challenging period we went through from 2000 to 2002."

He recalled the company was "spending a lot of money on RDand not bringing much in" during that time.

Stedfast now has more than 100 employees in Granby and at it's Charlotte, N.C., facility that specializes in a key component in seals, gaskets and roofing membranes.

mking@thegazette.canwest.com

## 'Dear soldier: ...'

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280063  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Food  
**PAGE:** G4  
**SOURCE:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 48

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You can send a special Canada Day message to Canadian troops serving in Afghanistan.

Labatt Blue has created "message in a blue bottle," and is encouraging Canadians to communicate their support and appreciation to approximately 2,500 members of the Canadian Forces currently deployed in Kandahar.

Log on to [labattblue.ca](http://labattblue.ca) to send messages online.

# No tools for the task

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280092  
**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** A8  
**COLUMN:** Don Martin  
**BYLINE:** Don Martin  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 663

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The Afghan police captain sat dabbing off forehead sweat in his sauna-like office while negotiating with Canadian soldiers and police constables melting in full battledress. It was hell — and not just because the ripped curtain behind his desk failed to block out the blinding sunlight in Sunday's 48-degree heat.

This is enforcement Hades, a pathetic display of tool-less Afghan officers flailing and failing to enforce law in a lawless land.

Capt. Mohammed Magood Rhanani's office walls had numerous white boards devoid of writing. There was no telephone, Internet connection, fax machine or any device that would extend communications beyond shouting distance.

Outside his unsigned police "station" was parked the only marked "police" vehicle — a filthy 400cc Honda motorcycle. Out back facing the mountains where the Taliban roam, the only weapon was a rusting piece of Russian artillery.

A total of 16 heavily armed Canadian soldiers with two police constables and this columnist had driven armoured RG-31 vehicles for almost an hour through dangerous territory to see how they could help the district commander of this 64-member police force.

A key part of the military's provincial reconstruction team is to upgrade local police efficiency and effectiveness, so the constables took out their notepads to see what the captain needed from Canada to do his job properly. The list seemed obvious — and endless.

The police captain demanded more guns. His small cache of AK-47s just wasn't up to the task. No can do, Medicine Hat Const. Gerald Boucher shrugged. Against military policy and, besides, weapons issued to police "officers" have been known to mysteriously end up in Taliban hands.

Rhanani requested vehicles because, after all, one motorcycle is not enough. Sorry, that's up to Afghanistan National Police headquarters to sort out, our police responded.

A wired perimeter fence perhaps? Const. Charles Reddick of Nova Scotia nodded, took out his pad and made a notation. That would go into the report as a Canadian recommendation to Afghan authorities.

## SIX CHECKPOINTS

There are six checkpoints under Rhanani's command, but no way to communicate between any of them except

an unreliable cell signal, no way to give chase if suspicious types make a run for it, no computer system to track what bad guy is where doing what.

Policing is clearly the Achilles heel of this region's quest for peace, order and quasi-decent government — and perhaps Canada's most pressing unfinished business if it leaves Afghanistan in 2009 when the mission mandate expires.

"Police are still looked at with much suspicion by our soldiers because they are a long way from being a professional police force," Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier told me last month. One glimpse at their confused state of ineffectiveness is all you need to confirm Hillier's view.

While Afghanistan's national military is progressing from a band of misfits into something resembling an army, its police forces are still grossly under-equipped and underpaid — and thus ineffective and corrupt.

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"We're making progress, but we're not here to do the job for them. In the end, it's up to them."

Whether Canada can offer significant lasting assistance is open to cynical speculation. Taking notes and dutifully filing reports that may or may not receive any attention inside the Afghanistan chain of command is a frustrating and seemingly hopeless way of adding local muscle to law enforcement.

But getting away with breaking the law in southern Afghanistan today is as simple as outrunning a small motorcycle which, one station officer told me, probably wouldn't even start.

Don Martin filed this column for CanWest News Service from Camp Nathan Smith, Kandahar. Email: [dmartin@canwest.com](mailto:dmartin@canwest.com)

# Harper handed Afghan agenda to the Opposition

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280118  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Letters  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A15  
**BYLINE:** Denis R. Boyle  
**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**WORD COUNT:** 248

---

Re: Parliamentary consensus required to extend mission, Harper says, June 23.

With one incomprehensible and unconscionable action, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has achieved three things: surrendered to the Taliban; increased the threat to our troops serving in Afghanistan; and forfeited management of national foreign and defence policy to Stephane Dion.

By giving the opposition the authority to determine when and under what conditions we will withdraw our troops, he has given them control of the agenda. By so doing, the day after three more of our soldiers were killed, he has advised the Taliban to kill as many more of our troops as possible to make sure Canadians don't forget Mr. Harper's folly, and to speed up our departure. He has invited the Taliban to target Canadians.

Thirdly, Mr. Harper has told them that all they have to do is wait another 19 months and Canada will withdraw from the field of battle, white flag raised, leaving NATO solidarity shattered. The only possibly positive thing he has achieved is to ensure that the Taliban won't attack Canadians on our own soil -- until February 2009.

Finally, with what possible logic did he do this on the last day of the current Parliamentary session?

I am a retired member of the Canadian Forces, having served slightly more than 39 years. Frankly, I now am left to wonder if it wasn't all wasted. This is the message the prime minister may well have sent to all of us retired and still serving.

Denis R. Boyle,

Ottawa

# Stephen Harper finally sees the writing on the wall

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280104  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A17  
**BYLINE:** Steven Staples  
**SOURCE:** Citizen Special  
**WORD COUNT:** 873

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He wore his poker face right up until the last day of Parliament, but by the end of the week Stephen Harper showed his cards: The war in Afghanistan is ending for Canada.

The prime minister told reporters last Friday that "this mission will end in February 2009." In the press conference he sounded subdued, resigned to the fact that despite using all of the government's resources to build support for the war, two-thirds of Canadians still want it to end in 2009.

He blamed the opposition, saying that he will put the decision to extend the mission to a vote, but he wants a "consensus" in Parliament first because he doesn't want to "send people into a mission if the opposition is going to, at home, undercut the work."

This was a very different Stephen Harper than the one who only weeks ago shouted across the floor of the House of Commons that the opposition parties cared more about the Taliban than our troops when they raised concerns about the possible torture of former detainees. Surely, that was the lowest point of the debate.

The truth is that Mr. Harper has caught up with most Canadians — he has reached his tipping point.

Mr. Harper now realizes that his embrace of the war effort is too costly politically for him and his party. The war that he made an unofficial cornerstone of his government turned out to be a millstone instead, grinding away at his popular support.

First, casualties are rising too quickly. Canada has lost 52 soldiers since moving to Kandahar 16 months ago, compared to only eight deaths in the entire preceding four years. Add to this hundreds of serious injuries, and the human toll is staggering for such a small force of 2,500 troops.

Second, our share of the load is excessive. Canada accepted too much of the burden in NATO by taking on a three-year deployment in the most dangerous part of the country. Canada's fatalities account for almost one-third of all non-U.S. deaths, even though Canada supplies one-tenth of the troops contributed by U.S. allies.

Third, there are few signs of the progress that Canadians have waited six years to see. Despite reams of nice-sounding statistics quoted by government officials, it's obvious that Afghanistan's problems are too deeply rooted. What's worse, the battle for hearts and minds is being lost to corruption, lack of aid, and civilian deaths caused by NATO air strikes.

Two events of last week are a metaphor for Canada's war efforts. In a painful lesson, three soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb placed in an area thought to be safely under our control. Meanwhile, NATO Secretary

General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer came to Ottawa to urge Canada to fight on beyond 2009, but made no promises of help from other NATO members.

Now that Mr. Harper has opened the door an inch for a change in Canada's military role in Afghanistan, there will be tremendous pressure to kick that door wide open. Calls for action will only intensify when more casualties are incurred while fighting a mission that the government has already lowered the curtain on.

If there is a consensus among opposition parties, as the prime minister puts it, they will want the government to notify NATO that the bulk of the Canadian troops, which are currently involved in a counter-insurgency combat role, will be moved out of Kandahar province by February 2009 — or sooner, if the NDP has its way.

As a sop to NATO, opposition parties would likely agree to some of the soldiers in the battle group being redeployed elsewhere in Afghanistan, along the same lines as Canada's uncontroversial peace support mission in Kabul prior to 2006. It may also be acceptable to opposition parties to leave behind a few hundred troops in the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team to train Afghan forces.

At home, it will be impossible for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor to oversee the demise of the mission that he so strongly, if ineffectively, defended on behalf of the government.

His handling of the war, especially the treatment of detainees, is a factor in the prime minister's grudging acceptance that the mission must end. A change in defence minister will have to accompany the change in government policy.

In a broader context, Prime Minister Harper's remarks last week may signal that the current military buildup and transformation of the Canadian Forces from peacekeepers to war fighters has reached its zenith.

The war has been used to justify an increase of billions in military spending, a reorganization of the forces to better fight the U.S.-led War on Terror, and more than \$20-billion in planned equipment purchases.

The Liberals and NDP have already called for a freeze on new major military contracts until the federal auditor general reports on the government's non-competitive procurement process in the fall. With the war all but over, what support will there be for billions of dollars worth of tanks and helicopters intended for Afghanistan?

The Canadian public has never been comfortable with the U.S.-friendly shifts in Canadian foreign policy that Afghanistan has been used to defend, and now they will want our government to be doing what Canadians have always supported — participating in United Nations peacekeeping missions and paying more attention to diplomacy and aid. That's probably the best news of all.

Steven Staples is director of the Rideau Institute on International Affairs and a board member of the Canadian Pugwash Group.

# Pursuing the mirage of peace

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**IDNUMBER** 200706280122  
**PUBLICATION:** National Post  
**DATE:** 2007.06.28  
**EDITION:** National  
**SECTION:** Editorials  
**PAGE:** A16  
**COLUMN:** Douglas Davis  
**DATELINE:** LONDON  
**BYLINE:** Douglas Davis  
**SOURCE:** National Post  
**WORD COUNT:** 755

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LONDON —Tony Blair will be joining an illustrious band of brothers when he heads to the Middle East on his peace-making mission.

Some of the most eminent movers and shakers in the diplomatic world have sought — and failed — to anchor their legacies in attempting to undo the Israeli–Palestinian knot. Will Blair, fresh from his triumph in Northern Ireland and backed by the Quartet (the U.S., EU, Russia and the UN), succeed where they have failed? The short answer, sadly, is no.

President Clinton came closest to a deal when he devoted his final weeks in office to banging together the heads of Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat at Camp David. His offer, supported by Barak, was the delivery of 97% of the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians, with tempting side deals on Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. Arafat said no.

It is difficult to imagine an Israeli government offering more. And it is difficult to imagine a Palestinian leader accepting less. Moreover, the essential precondition to peace-making — that the protagonists must be internally strong — is missing.

The reality is that both the Israeli and Palestinian leaders have never been weaker. Ehud Olmert's approval rating, according to recent opinion polls, is in the low single figures and probably does not extend much beyond his own family; the position of Mahmoud Abbas, having just been routed in Gaza, is even more tenuous.

But even if Messrs. Olmert and Abbas are willing, they must also be able to deliver. Sadly, again, they are not. The Israelis are not ready to make territorial concessions that will render them more vulnerable to the Palestinian Islamists. Equally unlikely is that the Palestinian Islamists, who formed a majority in last year's elections, are ready for a deal that falls short of Israel's total liquidation.

Nor will success in Northern Ireland provide Blair with a guide to success in the Israeli–Palestinian arena. Jerusalem is not Belfast. Sinn Fein/IRA were propelled to the negotiating table — and ultimately to a deal with the Unionists — because they had been defeated, politically and militarily.

By contrast, the Palestinians, and particularly the Islamists within their ranks, are on a roll. Hamas has support throughout the region and vast sums are pouring into their Gaza statelet, not least from Tehran. They see victory for the Islamist cause wherever they look, from Iran and Lebanon to Iraq and Afghanistan.

For the moment, and for the foreseeable future, perhaps a generation, there is unlikely to be a deal between Israel and the Palestinians. The hardest —and the bravest — course for Blair and the Quartet is to recognize that the dispute is not susceptible to a settlement at present because the essential components are simply not in place.

Rather than pursuing the mirage of a peace deal, this powerful coalition should devote its time and substantial resources to achieving smaller, more modest goals — constructing viable security arrangements, building mutual confidence, fostering the moderates and encouraging the emergence of a civil society in the Palestinian areas. Such incremental steps will create the conditions for economic growth and political stability.

The Palestinians could have had their state in the West Bank and Gaza a couple of decades ago if that had indeed been their real objective. Rather, they have been constrained by their own inhibitions (Arafat knew that his Palestinian Liberation Organization would fracture if there was a deal), but also by some of the major players in the region.

It is only when the conflict ceases to be in the national (read: personal) interests of the region's leaders that it may become amenable to peace-making. Until then, the Quartet should focus its collective attention not only on the weak and over-burdened principals in Jerusalem and Ramallah, but also on those regional leaders who have shamelessly used the conflict to pursue their own agendas.

Perhaps most critical of all to the Blair mission is the person of Blair himself. The Israelis may talk of him as a friend, but the Palestinians regarded Saddam Hussein in almost messianic terms, and they will certainly take a different view. Tony Blair is accustomed to high-wire acts, but the harsh fact of life in the Middle East is that any deal which contains his name will almost certainly be drained of legitimacy in the Palestinian world, the Arab world—and in the wider Islamic world. — Douglas Davis is a former senior editor of the Jerusalem Post.

**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; PRESIDENTS; PALESTINE