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Cdn. pride brightens war zone; Troops in Afghanistan celebrate Canada Day with barbecue, a couple of 'cool ones'

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A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield yesterday as hundreds swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Gone were the digitized uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian. Soldiers and support employees alike tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes the military's work here in favour of some pure Canadian spirit.

"It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this," said Cpl. James Nickerson, 34, of Canso, N.S., as he strolled the boardwalk at the airfield decked out with strings of Canadian flags on the banister. Bigger flags hung from the ceiling.

"Now if it could only just snow."

Indeed, one of the only regular things about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the soldiers and civilians who took part in organized activities at the sprawling airfield where international troops are based.

The other fixture was the line at Tim Hortons, where even soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing the best of the day to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of the reality TV show *Amazing Race* in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

"For me, it's just a great representation of our contribution over here," said Sgt. Andy Smith, 42, based out of Petawawa, Ont.

"When you see all the soldiers and all the civilian staff we have here taking part and helping run the events and participating in the events, it's awesome."

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar gathered for a barbecue and the real prize of the day — two cold cans of beer each.

Many soldiers had packed away some red-and-white specifically for Canada Day and the costumes were out in full force, from tall "Cat-in-the-Hat" striped red and white, to polka-dot dresses and Maple Leaf ties.

Cdn. pride brightens war zone; Troops in Afghanistan celebrate Canada Day with barbecue, a couple of 'cool ones'

At a table handing out free donuts and coffee, soldiers grabbed up Maple Leaf pins and flags, and chased each other around trying to stick on temporary flag tattoos.

For many of the Canadians on the ground, July 1 is more than Canada's birthday — it also marks the start of the last month of their tour of duty.

It's been a hard six months — 16 soldiers have been killed since the current rotation arrived in February.

Side-stepping an impromptu water fight, Sgt. Steven Gardiner said Canada Day in Afghanistan was partly about them.

"This is to celebrate what they gave up," said Gardiner, a reservist from Hamilton.

"The freedom they're giving the Afghan people."

Rally raises cash, support for overseas troops; 'Sea of red' event reminds Metro residents of sacrifices made by men and women in uniform

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Mayor Lorne Mitton was among the assembled guests at the Canada Day benefit rally for the troops Saturday and gave a speech as part of an emotional ceremony organized by the Moncton Royal Canadian Legion Branch #6.

"On behalf of all Monctonians, I would like to thank all of those who have fought for our country and are currently deployed overseas. The sacrifices you have made and those you are presently making are to be admired," Mitton said to the approximately 300 veterans, special guests and community members in attendance outside the legion.

Mitton, who has two sons in the military, says the choice to support the mission is political but all Canadians should support the men and women who are fighting overseas.

The goal of Saturday's rally was simple — to show support and to raise money to help give the troops a "little taste of home."

Trudy Cormier, legion president, says it costs \$6,000 to give all the troops a Tim Hortons coffee and timbit, and the legion hopes to raise as much as possible in order to help give them "a gift of our love and affection."

"We are trying to get people to be patriotic and realize the sacrifices that the sons and daughters of Canada make for this country," Cormier said.

She said the turnout for the event was a little disappointing, but she was extremely impressed with the people who did show up.

She says those in attendance were touched by the ceremonies — which included a parade, a reading of the names of the fallen soldiers and the performance of a tribute song called "The Canadian Soldier."

The song was co-written three years ago by Michelle East and Wayne Mullins and was performed by Roy LeBlanc with help from East. The moving performance brought many in the crowd to tears and even overcame LeBlanc as he performed.

"Emotions were running high and staring at the veterans in front of me — emotions got the best of me," LeBlanc said.

"It was an honour to perform it," he added.

Rally raises cash, support for overseas troops; 'Sea of red' event reminds Metro residents of sacrifices made

For Maxine Dobson, whose nephew is currently deployed in Afghanistan, the ceremony was especially meaningful.

"It means a lot. It's touching, I cried through the whole thing," she said.

Linda Cupelli, who has a son and brother overseas, says the ceremony "meant the world" to her and is not only about the troops.

"It's not just about supporting the troops, but supporting us who have family over there. It's all pretty scary," Cupelli said.

Also in attendance at the event were the RCMP Pipe and Drum Band, the Squadron 560 cadets, numerous veterans and RCMP.

Those who have experienced the front lines were also able to draw a lot from the ceremony.

Dennis Goodwin is a veteran who landed on Juno Beach on D-Day during the Second World War and was recently awarded the Legion d'Honneur by France's ambassador to Canada in a ceremony in Fredericton.

He says Saturday's ceremony was especially important, because he knows the ordeals the troops go through.

"I've been on the front lines and know what it's like," he said.

Goodwin says he accepted his award for all members of his group, and he wears it with pride and honour. He thinks troop support — in any form — is quite valuable.

The public ceremony wrapped up with a photo of the "sea of red" — all the attendees who wore red T-shirts. The picture will be sent overseas to the troops, in a scrapbook with numerous clippings and items compiled by friends and family back home.

"The troops need to know that we support them every minute of every day," said event organizer Bonnie Atkins. "They're doing a great job over there and we need them to know that."

Ottawa goes upbeat for Canada Day; Prime Minister's message: This country's back

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As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill that Canada is once again a player on the world stage.

He delivered a brief state-of-the-nation address whose cheerful tone was in stark contrast to the sombre, overcast skies that loomed overhead as he took the stage before 35,000 people.

Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower, he said.

"The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Harper told the crowd yesterday.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage. . . Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour."

His upbeat message was heard by thousands who braved the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the milestone birthday celebration in the nation's capital.

He said Canada has been blessed by God — with its wealth of natural resources — and been blessed by the presence of its dynamic people.

"From the natural wealth of the land that God created to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all nations of the Earth," he said, "we are a country that has been truly blessed."

Harper delivered that message after arriving on the hill with his wife and children, as a 21-gun military salute opened a noontime show under a dark and cool 14C sky.

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 new Canadians at a citizenship ceremony at Rideau Hall.

She reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: hope and freedom. She lauded Canadian soldiers seeking to spread those same values in Afghanistan.

Jean fled Haiti as a refugee after her father was badly beaten by the Duvalier regime.

"I know the value of this liberty," Jean said.

"We should never take for granted how lucky we are to be able to think, to say, to choose, to act, to live in complete liberty while barbarism and misery afflict so many other countries."

At roughly the same moment, a Rwandan refugee was among 99 people preparing to become a Canadian at a citizenship ceremony in Edmonton.

Pauline Mukashema described fleeing her home to the sound of gunshots and gangs approaching, as her native country degenerated into a wave of genocidal violence in 1994.

All she brought with her were five photographs and some clothing. After years living in other African countries, she moved with her parents and siblings to Canada in 2003.

"It was a dream to come to Canada," said Mukashema, now 25.

"The one thing that always (stopped) me is, 'You don't have an identity. You're a refugee, you don't have anything.' . . . Now that I'm a Canadian, I'm able to travel, I'm able to vote, I'm able to really make things happen."

"It's home now."

In Ottawa, Jean and the prime minister worked the crowd, with the governor general warmly clasping hands and exchanging words with dozens of audience members.

Harper's speech drew polite applause.

The biggest crowd reaction came when the Canadian Forces' flying Snowbirds fanned out across the sky above the Peace Tower in perfect synchronicity with the dramatic final notes of O Canada.

While those skies were mostly grey, there was a considerable amount of blue on stage.

The traditional red and white could be seen everywhere — on flags, as part of peoples' clothing, and on a giant stage set up beneath the Peace Tower as the centrepiece of the festivities.

At least three RCMP officers stood guard at each entrance point to the hill, checking purses, bags and backpacks as revellers made their way to the lawns in front of the Centre Block.

There were also police officers and security cameras installed around the nearby War Memorial with its Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Young party-goers ignited a national scandal by urinating on the monument during last year's event.

In Montreal, thousands lined the streets for a parade Sunday that featured a multicultural celebration and even a political statement.

This political statement, however, had nothing to do with the decades-old nationalist tug-of-war between Quebec and Canada.

It had to do with the Atlantic seal hunt. Draped only in Canadian flags, a man and woman from Concordia University who denounced the hunt were invited to join the parade.

"One of the beauties about being Canadian is you can do whatever you want on that day," said parade-watcher Bob Hutchings.

"They are part of the parade because Canada lets you protest."

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Danny Williams reflected on the anniversary of the First World War Battle of Beaumont Hamel.

During a wreath-laying ceremony in St. John's, the premier announced plans to unveil plaques commemorating the hundreds of Newfoundland men killed during the war.

"We must always appreciate that they paid for our freedom with their lives," Williams said in a statement.

"In a small and symbolic way, we will finally bring these soldiers home."

The bronze plaques will be replicas of ones found at a memorial in France.

They will be unveiled next July 1.

In Halifax, hundreds gathered under sunny skies at the historic Citadel site to eat birthday cake and watch a foot-and-arms drill by the 78th Highlanders.

Bart Snell of Dartmouth, a retired master seaman in the navy, paused for a moment when asked what Canada Day meant to him.

"I served 25 and a half years in the military," Snell said.

"It means being able to have Canada Day peacefully ... no matter what race or nationality you are."

Troops mark Canada Day in Kandahar

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A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield on Sunday as hundreds swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Gone were the digitized uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian. Soldiers and support employees alike tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes the military's work here in favour of some pure Canadian spirit.

"It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this," said Cpl. James Nickerson, 34, of Canso, N.S., as he strolled the boardwalk at the airfield decked out with strings of Canadian flags on the banister. Bigger flags hung from the ceiling. "Now if it could only just snow."

One of the only regular things about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the soldiers and civilians who took part in organized activities at the sprawling airfield where international troops are based.

The other fixture was the line at Tim Hortons, where even soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing the best of the day to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of the reality TV show *Amazing Race* in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

"For me, it's just a great representation of our contribution over here," said Sgt. Andy Smith, 42, based out of Petawawa, Ont.

"When you see all the soldiers and all the civilian staff we have here taking part and helping run the events and participating in the events, it's awesome."

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar gathered for a barbecue and the real prize of the day — two cold beer.

Though surrounded by barbed wire and the drone of warplanes overhead, Canada House on the base had the laid-back chill of a long weekend at the cottage on Sunday night.

Soldiers were all smiles as they hoisted up their beer, one joking he wished every day could be Canada Day.

Most simply enjoyed the time to relax, aware that down time in Kandahar is a luxury.

"We still have to go back out, the guys that work outside the wire still have to go out, we still have a mission to do, we still have an objective that we have to finish," said Cpl. Fred Trainor, 44, from Gagetown, N.B.

"You can't let your guard down all the way, you've got to pick it up, leave tomorrow or the next day and carry on. It's not over yet."

Many soldiers had packed away some red-and-white specifically for Canada Day and the costumes were out in full force, from tall "Cat-in-the-Hat" striped red and white, to polka-dot dresses and Maple Leaf ties.

At a table handing out free donuts and coffee, soldiers grabbed up Maple Leaf pins and flags, and chased each other around trying to stick on temporary flag tattoos.

For Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, head of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, Canada Day was a time to take pride in being Canadian. He quipped that though anyone could be on Parliament Hill for the holiday, only a chosen few could celebrate in Afghanistan.

"When we're at home for Canada Day we kind of take for granted the lifestyle that we live," he said in an interview with The Canadian Press.

N.L. hamlet gathers to mourn native son killed in Afghanistan

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Moments after she was handed a folded Canadian flag that draped over her brother's coffin, Kelly Bouzane knelt down and kissed the casket as nearly everyone in this central Newfoundland hamlet of less than 400 people looked on, mourning the loss of a native son.

Cpl. Stephen Bouzane was remembered as a loyal son and soldier that younger troops admired at a funeral service that brought out mixed emotions over Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

After the funeral, Kelly Bouzane thanked all Canadian Armed Forces personnel and wished for their safe return home.

"We love you, we're thinking of you. Come home safe to us," she said, clutching the Canadian flag with her father Fred, as she choked back tears.

"Stephen will be watching over all of you."

Outside Sacred Heart Parish Roman Catholic Church, Gloria Wellman and two other people hoisted a large Canadian flag in tribute to Bouzane's sacrifice in the war-torn country.

"Even though I may not believe in everything our government is doing, I do support our troops, and they need to know that they're supported," Wellman said.

Marilyn Bonnier, who knew Bouzane's grandfather, said the 26-year-old's death was senseless.

"It's a shame that these things have to happen," said Bonnier of nearby Springdale, N.L.

"You think of past years when other lives have been taken, but when they're closer to home, it's all that more poignant."

Bouzane was born in St. Patricks but spent most of his life growing up in Toronto before he took on an active role with the Edmonton-based 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

Bouzane died June 20 after the unarmoured vehicle he was in was hit by a roadside bomb west of Kandahar as they travelled between checkpoints.

Funeral services for Sgt. Christos Karigiannis and Pte. Joel Wiebe, who also died in the blast, were held Saturday in Quebec and Alberta. All three belonged to the same battalion.

Their deaths prompted the Canadian military to suspend the use of the unarmoured vehicles, known as Gators, outside secure compounds.

Roadside bombs have accounted for more than one-third of the deaths of Canadian Forces personnel in Afghanistan.

Sixty Canadian Forces personnel and a diplomat have been killed in Afghanistan since 2002.

Tattoo a tsunami of sound; Military drills, grand opera and pageantry sure to thrill audiences

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BYLINE: Stephen Pederson Arts Reporter

ILLUSTRATION: The 2007 Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo previewed to a packed house Saturday night at the Metro Centre. (Ted Pritchard / Staff)

WORD COUNT: 669

It was only the preview show. And with some major performers not available as late as Wednesday of the last week of rehearsals, it might not have been expected to go perfectly smoothly on the first run-through with an audience in the house.

But Saturday night in the Metro Centre, before a packed house, the preview of the 2007 Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo purred its way through 2½ hours of concert bands, marching bands, drill teams, acrobatics, drama, pageantry and operatic glory as flawlessly as a Rolls–Royce after a thorough tune-up.

The show had the expected never-fail mix of military display, pomp and circumstance, the glory of eight full concert, pipe and drum bands worth of musicians, and nearly 200 singers, all filling the Metro Centre with a tsunami of sound you only get to experience for eight nights a year in early July in Halifax.

The emotional range, apart from the apotheosis of the finale, ran like a three-ring circus from the slapstick clowning of the Hamburg Police's Flying Grandpas hijinks on the trampoline to the stunning power of operatic soprano Measha Bruegggosman singing arias from *Madama Butterfly* (*Un bel di*) and Gianni Schicchi (*O mio babbino caro*) in *A Night at the Opera* for the Act One Finale.

Bruegggosman's honeyed resonance needs no amplification under normal circumstances, but with a microphone in front of her, a stage filled with more than a hundred singers across the arena at the other end, and between, a floor filled with brass bands to challenge her, the amplified forcefulness of her artistry brought sudden tears to the eye.

In this scene, she shared the spotlight with fellow New Brunswickers tenor Derrick Paul Miller and baritone Joe Donahue. They made for an awesome 20 minutes of arias, marches and choruses from operas by Gounod, Verdi, Bizet and, above all, Puccini.

The tattoo is already grand opera anyway. But with Puccini, whose music so captures the tattoo spirit of aspiration and glory, and a final excerpt from his *Nessun Dorma* (from *Turandot*) with Miller leading off the familiar buildup to the final "Vincitor," followed by the march-off to the Toreador music from Bizet's *Carmen*, when you finally came back to earth and the suddenly empty arena floor, all you could think about was how good a hotdog and a beer would taste about now.

A moving pageant on the theme of the suffering of war in a tribute to the fallen at Vimy Ridge, where Canada became a nation 90 years ago, and the continuing sacrifice of young Canadian men and women in Afghanistan struck the only solemn note in the show. It deserved and continues to deserve our respect and remembrances.

Among the highlights of a show filled with highlights, The King's Guards' Band and Drill Team from Norway gave a spectacular display of military drill so tight and precise every move was as sharp as the crease on the guards' trousers.

The nimble feet of La Baie en Joie dancers, the strumming energy and musical skill of the Langley Ukulele Ensemble, the excitement of the Royal Belgian Guides Bugle Corps, the comedy of the Grandpas and the Swiss d'Holmikers display of a dozen shiny-suited Elvises doing impossible wheels and shoulder stands on the parallel bars or clowning their way through the story of Snow White, the Tattoo and Amethyst Dancers with their sword dances and hornpipes, and the Atlantica Gymnasts' Hell's Grannies motor-scooter club all added up to non-stop entertainment in which act followed act so quickly the two hours sped by.

At the end, the Belgian Buglers played taps in surround sound, two pairs each on both west and east sides of the building above the concourse level, resonantly answering and echoing each other, and Measha Brueggergosman, in a white gown, sang a sweetly lingering Ave Maria (Schubert) before the massed bands sent everybody home to the traditional "Hoy!" of The Black Bear.()

PM's pep talk: 'We're a vital player'; Polite applause greets Harper's Canada Day message

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ILLUSTRATION:	Kailyn Kerr, 6, smiles as she watches the parade in Komoka, west of London, Ont. (DAVE CHIDLEY / CP); Brothers Keenan and Matt wear their finest Canadian apparel in Montreal. (Peter McCabe / CP); Alan Penfold displays his colours in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. (Rachele Labrecque / CP)
WORD COUNT:	593

OTTAWA – As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill that Canada is once again a player on the world stage.

He delivered a brief state-of-the-nation address whose cheerful tone was in stark contrast to the sombre, overcast skies that loomed overhead as he took the stage before 35,000 people.

Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower, he said. "The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Harper told the crowd Sunday.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage . . . Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour."

His upbeat message was heard by thousands who braved the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the milestone birthday celebration in the nation's capital.

He said Canada has been blessed by God – with its wealth of natural resources – and been blessed by the presence of its dynamic people. "From the natural wealth of the land that God created to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all nations of the Earth," he said, "we are a country that has been truly blessed." Harper delivered that message after arriving on the hill with his wife and children, as a 21-gun military salute opened a noontime show under a dark and cool 14C sky.

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 new Canadians at a citizenship ceremony at Rideau Hall.

She reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: hope and freedom. She lauded Canadian soldiers seeking to spread those same values in Afghanistan.

At roughly the same moment, a Rwandan refugee was among 99 people preparing to become a Canadian at a citizenship ceremony in Edmonton.

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All she brought with her were five photographs and some clothing. After years living in other African countries, she moved with her parents and siblings to Canada in 2003.

"It was a dream to come to Canada," said Mukashema, now 25.

"The one thing that always (stopped) me is, 'You don't have an identity. You're a refugee, you don't have anything.' . . . Now that I'm a Canadian, I'm able to travel, I'm able to vote, I'm able to really make things happen."

"It's home now."

In Ottawa, Jean and the prime minister worked the crowd, with the governor general warmly clasping hands and exchanging words with dozens of audience members.

Harper's speech drew polite applause.

The biggest crowd reaction came when the Canadian Forces' flying Snowbirds fanned out across the sky above the Peace Tower in perfect synchronicity with the dramatic final notes of O Canada.

There was also plenty of blue on the periphery of Parliament Hill – in the police uniforms visible everywhere as the security presence had been visibly stepped up.

At least three RCMP officers stood guard at each entrance point to the hill, checking purses, bags and backpacks as revellers made their way to the lawns in front of the Centre Block.

There were also police officers and security cameras installed around the nearby War Memorial with its Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Young party-goers ignited a national scandal by urinating on the monument during last year's event.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Danny Williams reflected on the anniversary of the First World War Battle of Beaumont Hamel.

During a wreath-laying ceremony in St. John's, the premier announced plans to unveil plaques commemorating the hundreds of Newfoundland men killed during the war.

"We must always appreciate that they paid for our freedom with their lives," Williams said in a statement.

"In a small and symbolic way, we will finally bring these soldiers home."

Canada Day in Kandahar; Troops celebrate with BBQ, games, and, of course, a couple of 'cool ones'

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.07.02
SECTION: World
PAGE: A5
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Stephanie Levitz
ILLUSTRATION: Clp. Melissa Joseph of Sydney gets into the Canada Dayspirit. (Stephanie Levitz / CP); Gunner Sheldon Davis, Master Bombardier Brad Colwell and Bombardier David Shea enjoy their Canada Day beer in Kandahar on Sunday. (Stephanie Levitz / CP)
WORD COUNT: 697

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield on Sunday as hundreds swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Gone were the digitized uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian. Soldiers and support employees alike tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes the military's work here in favour of some pure Canadian spirit.

"It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this," said Cpl. James Nickerson, 34, of Canso as he strolled the boardwalk at the airfield decked out with strings of Canadian flags on the banister. Bigger flags hung from the ceiling.

"Now if it could only just snow."

Indeed, one of the only regular things about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the soldiers and civilians who took part in organized activities at the sprawling airfield where international troops are based.

The other fixture was the line at Tim Hortons, where even soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing the best of the day to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of the reality TV show *Amazing Race* in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

"For me, it's just a great representation of our contribution over here," said Sgt. Andy Smith, 42, based out of Petawawa, Ont.

"When you see all the soldiers and all the civilian staff we have here taking part and helping run the events and participating in the events, it's awesome."

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar gathered for a barbecue and the real prize of the day – two cold beer.

Though surrounded by barbed wire and the drone of warplanes overhead, Canada House on the base had the laid-back chill of a long weekend at the cottage on Sunday night.

Soldiers were all smiles as they hoisted up their beer, one joking he wished every day could be Canada Day.

Most simply enjoyed the time to relax, aware that down time in Kandahar is a luxury.

"We still have to go back out, the guys that work outside the wire still have to go out, we still have a mission to do, we still have an objective that we have to finish," said Cpl. Fred Trainor, 44, from Gagetown.

"You can't let your guard down all the way, you've got to pick it up, leave tomorrow or the next day and carry on. It's not over yet." Many soldiers had packed away some red-and-white specifically for Canada Day and the costumes were out in full force, from tall Cat-in-the-Hat striped red and white, to polka-dot dresses and Maple Leaf ties.

At a table handing out free doughnuts and coffee, soldiers grabbed up Maple Leaf pins and flags, and chased each other around trying to stick on temporary flag tattoos.

For Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, head of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, Canada Day was a time to take pride in being Canadian. He quipped that though anyone could be on Parliament Hill for the holiday, only a chosen few could celebrate in Afghanistan.

"When we're at home for Canada Day we kind of take for granted the lifestyle that we live," he said in an interview with The Canadian Press.

"When you're over here and you see how other people around the world live, it really drives home how lucky we are."

For many of the Canadians on the ground, July 1 is more than Canada's birthday – it also marks the start of the last month of their tour of duty.

Grant said as he nears the end of his mission, he reflects on whether the values celebrated on July 1 are making an impact in the country Canada has chosen to try and help.

"It makes you wonder if we have been as successful as we could have been in helping to make this country a little bit closer to having the same kind of lifestyles, the same kind of benefits and human freedoms that we accept as a given back home," he said.

"We're making progress, not as quick as some would like, but the fact is this is a better place now than it was when I got here eight months ago and I'm sure it will continue to be better."

It hasn't been an easy rotation for the troops – 16 soldiers have been killed since they arrived in the country in February.

Side-stepping an impromptu water fight, Sgt. Steven Gardiner said Canada Day in Afghanistan was partly about them.

"This is to celebrate what they gave up," said Gardiner, a reservist from Hamilton. "The freedom they're giving the Afghan people."

Canada Day in Kandahar; Troops celebrate with BBQ, games, and, of course, a couple of 'cool ones'

Let's not employ Canadian spirit in vain

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SECTION: News

PAGE: A5

BYLINE: Scott Taylor

WORD COUNT: 735

LAST MONTH, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made some startling comments that hinted at a reversal of the Conservative government's previous position on our military commitment in Afghanistan. No longer was Harper beating his chest and yelling, "We don't cut and run." Instead, the prime minister suggested that any military deployment beyond the current commitment of February 2009 would require "some degree of consensus" from the opposition parties.

Given the bellicosity with which all these parties have insisted our troops are repatriated at the 2009 expiration date (or sooner, in the case of the NDP), it is unfathomable that such a degree of consensus can be achieved.

By indicating that he is prepared to accept a termination of the military mission, Harper has inspired the war–mongering pundits to redouble their efforts to sell the war to an increasingly disenchanted Canadian public.

One common thread among the drum–beaters is that by debating the relative merits of the mission, Canadians are actually encouraging the Taliban to kill our soldiers. Any public discourse over the sacrifice of our troops that causes a drop in public opinion will inspire the insurgents to single out Canadians, runs their theory. Apparently, we should just shut up, mourn our dead and continue to pour troops into Afghanistan unquestioningly. Those who argue in favour of continuing such an open–ended, unchallenged military mission claim they "get it," while anyone who asks to see tangible evidence of progress to justify the sacrifice doesn't "get it."

However, given that a recent poll concluded more than two–thirds of Canadians would not support an extension of our military deployment beyond 2009, maybe the naysayers do "get it." Canada has now been involved in the "war on terror" for 69 months – longer than any other conflict in our short history. To date, 60 soldiers have been killed and more than 260 wounded in Afghanistan, fighting an enemy we were told was defeated in November 2001. If we do withdraw from Kandahar in 2009, it is estimated that we will have spent \$9 billion on military operations versus less than \$1 billion in reconstruction aid funding.

The NATO mission to which we contribute 2,500 troops is propping up the corrupt and widely distrusted regime of President Hamid Karzai. Despite five years of international efforts to train and equip an Afghan army, no one believes Karzai could remain in power for more than a week without the presence of foreign troops. The very same warlords and drug lords that constitute Karzai's cabinet would turn on him (and each other) in a heartbeat if given the opportunity. By trying to drive the Taliban and other insurgents under a central Kabul government that is incapable of achieving this on their own, Canada is essentially a participant in an Afghan civil war.

Whenever our soldiers suffer casualties, military commanders reassure us that their "soldiers remain dedicated to the mission," while families of deceased soldiers invariably tell reporters that their loved one had "believed in the mission." Inarguably, these are true statements. Our soldiers do firmly believe in this mission, just as they firmly believed in the deployments to Kosovo, East Timor, Haiti, Somalia, Croatia, Bosnia, Cyprus, etc.

They believe because they took an oath of allegiance to the Queen and pledged to defend Canada's interests with their lives if necessary. Unfortunately, many of the overzealous war-promoting commentators argue that our soldiers' belief in the mission is in itself reason to continue the commitment indefinitely.

If the Canadian government does terminate the deployment in 2009 as Harper has indicated, our top commanders will be given a new set of orders. If the objective becomes the safe and efficient repatriation of our troops and equipment with a minimum of disruption to our NATO allies, then I have no doubt whatsoever our army will achieve that goal in a professional, capable manner.

If at that junction a journalist asks a Canadian soldier whether he agrees with the withdrawal, he will dutifully reply, "Yes, I believe in my mission."

Soldiers follow orders and serve their country. It is imperative that we as Canadians ensure that self-sacrificing spirit is not employed in vain.()

Harper hyped on Canada Day

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SECTION: National

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Alexander Panetta; Terry Pedwell

DATELINE: Ottawa

ILLUSTRATION: Prime Minister Stephen Harper greets people during CanadaDay celebrations on Parliament Hill in Ottawa Sunday. – Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 432

As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill that Canada is once again a player on the world stage.

He delivered that brief state-of-the-nation address whose cheerful tone was in stark contrast to the chilly, overcast skies that loomed over the crowd of 35,000 on Parliament Hill.

Harper said Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower.

His upbeat message was heard by thousands who braved the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the milestone birthday celebration in the nation's capital.

"The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Harper told the crowd Sunday.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage ... Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour."

He said Canada has been blessed by God with its wealth of natural resources, and been blessed by the presence of its dynamic people.

"From the natural wealth of the land that God created to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all nations of the Earth," he said, "we are a country that has been truly blessed." Harper delivered that message after arriving on the hill with his wife and children, as a 21-gun military salute opened a noontime show under a dark and cool 14C sky.

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 new Canadians at a citizenship ceremony at Rideau Hall.

She reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: hope and freedom. She lauded Canadian soldiers seeking to spread those same values in Afghanistan.

Jean fled Haiti as a refugee after her father was badly beaten by the Duvalier regime. "I know the value of this liberty," Jean said. "We should never take for granted how lucky we are to be able to think, to say, to choose, to act, to live in complete liberty while barbarism and misery afflict so many other countries."

Jean and the prime minister then worked the crowd.

Harper's speech drew polite applause.

The biggest crowd reaction came when the Canadian Forces' flying Snowbirds fanned out across the sky above the Peace Tower in perfect synchronicity with the dramatic final notes of "O Canada".

While those skies were mostly grey, there was a considerable amount of blue on stage.

The traditional red and white could be seen everywhere .

But an Ottawa radio station called for a boycott of the festivities in protest against the Conservative party colours being plastered on the giant "Canada" sign above the main stage.

"Show your support for Canada by avoiding Parliament Hill and its festivities," said an online statement by station Hot 89-9.

"There are hundreds of things to do besides attending this bizarre display of 'patriotism.' If you do attend, you'll be left feeling blue."

Bouzane laid to rest; Soldier killed in Afghanistan buried in St. Patrick's

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SECTION: Front

PAGE: A1

SOURCE: Transcontinental Media—St. Patrick's; CP

BYLINE: Elizabeth MacDonald

ILLUSTRATION: Kelly Bouzane, sister of Cpl. Stephen Bouzane, rests at his grave after his funeral in Sacred Heart Cemetery in St. Patrick's Saturday. Bouzane, 26, from 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, was killed on duty in Afghanistan June 20. — Photo by The Canadian Press; The family of Cpl. Stephen Bouzane (from left) father Fred, mother Moureen and sister Kelly Bouzane, along with close friend Cpl. Mark Costa (right) stand at his grave in Sacred Heart Cemetery in St. Patrick's Saturday. Bouzane, 26, from 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, was killed on duty in Afghanistan June 20. — Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 389

While Canadians prepared to celebrate Canada Day with concerts and parties, solemn celebrations of life took place across the country Saturday as families and friends said goodbye to three soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

Funeral services for Sgt. Christos Karigiannis, Cpl. Stephen Bouzane and Pte. Joel Wiebe were held in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and Alberta, respectively.

Yellow ribbons

Yellow ribbons tied to alders and spruce trees lined the road to St. Patrick's for Bouzane's funeral, a spontaneous display of support for troops and condolences to the family of the fallen soldier.

Nearly 200 people attended the funeral at Sacred Heart Parish in St. Patrick's to pay final respects to Bouzane, including Lt.-Gov. Ed Roberts. The small church was filled to capacity, as was a tent, equipped with a live video feed, which was erected next to the church for overflow.

Bouzane was killed June 20, along with Wiebe and Karigiannis, after a roadside bomb struck them while driving in an unarmoured all-terrain vehicle near Sperwan Ghar, southwest of Kandahar, Afghanistan.

The service, which began at 2 p.m., began with words from Maj. G. T. Zilkalns, of the Edmonton-based 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, who spoke of the leadership qualities of the 26-year-old soldier.

"He learned lessons that take some people a career," said Zilkalns, noting the young soldier's skills, intelligence and fitness.

Zilkalns said Bouzane welcomed new soldiers in the field, often took them under his wing to train them and was "wise beyond his years."

He stated the qualities shown by Bouzane proved him to be a good soldier and an even better man who showed strength of character and the ability to work as part of a team and also showed his maturity through

his leadership abilities. He said Bouzane would be missed.

"He knew there was a difference between living a life that mattered and merely existing."

Following the service, Bouzane's sister Kelly kissed her brother's casket and delivered an emotional message to soldiers still serving in Afghanistan.

"We love you, we're thinking of you. Come home safe to us," she said, clutching the Canadian flag that had draped her brother's casket.

"Stephen will be watching over all of you."

Mourners moved next door to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cemetery while a lone bagpiper played as the remains were taken to his plot next to his grandfather, where he said he wanted to be buried.

Bouzane was born in Springdale, has family in Little Bay, but grew up in Ontario. His parents, Moureen and Fred, live in St. Albans, and his sister, Kelly, lives in Scarborough, Ont.

A service to honour the three soldiers is expected to be held in Edmonton next month after more soldiers are redeployed.

Sixty Canadian military personnel and one diplomat have lost their lives in Afghanistan since 2002.

Canadians celebrate 140th; Troops in Afghanistan mark nation's birthday under the blistering sun

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Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / At the other end of the throw, an unidentified Afghan National Army soldier reins in the disc. ; Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Cpl. Rikk Lewis fires a Frisbee during Canada Day festivities at the forward operating base of Ma'sum Ghar, Afghanistan. ; Photo: Chris Schwarz, CanWest News Service / Shauntel Ronan, 11, sports a Maple Leaf on her cheek while enjoying Canada Day events in

ILLUSTRATION: Edmonton yesterday. ; Photo: Scott Robert Collins, CanWest News Service / A veteran salutes while participating in the annual parade along Montreal's Ste. Catherine Street. ; Photo: Mike Carrocetto, CanWest News Service / Two-year-old Annie Li brushes past Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean at a citizenship ceremony in Ottawa. ; Photo: Mike Carrocetto, CanWest News Service / Snowbirds streak over the Peace Tower during yesterday's celebrations on Parliament Hill. ;

DATELINE: OTTAWA

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 503

OTTAWA — As Canada turned 140 yesterday, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean and Prime Minister Stephen Harper celebrated the nation's international role in making peace, fighting climate change, and even playing hockey — saying those efforts are what makes Canada an "amazing" country and world leader.

Half a world away, some Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan celebrated under the searing sun while others were checking out the party from armoured vehicles as they rumbled off to hazardous combat operations.

On Parliament Hill, thousands of people crowded the lawns to take in the day-long festivities, which included a 21-gun salute, a flypast by the Snowbirds, concerts and fireworks to cap the night.

"From hockey championships to humanitarian and military leadership roles in Afghanistan and Haiti, Canada is a citizen of the world and we can make our contribution a positive one," Harper said.

The governor general used her Canada Day message to say Canadians have a responsibility to help those who suffer.

"We cannot overstate how lucky we are to be able to think, speak, choose, act and live in complete freedom. Not when barbarism and misery affect so many countries and people around the world," Jean said on Parliament Hill.

"I was born in a country that was under a merciless dictatorship, so like many Canadians who have come here from abroad, I know how precious that freedom really is," she said.

Some of the soldiers celebrating in Afghanistan said they are excited about getting home soon, when their

replacements take over.

Capt. Colleen Rose hasn't been home since September. Her two young sons, ages four and six, effectively turned her husband into a single parent while she trained in minus 40 Celsius degrees in Alberta before being deployed to 50 C temperatures in Afghanistan.

"You can't imagine what it's like being away that long," Rose said. "You can't put it into words. Only people who have lived it understand it," she said, while monitoring the start of the Kandahar Amazing Race she planned. "My husband says now that it's only a month before I get home to see the boys, he'll start putting the toilet seats back on."

Across Canada, Canada Day celebrations promised to uplift spirits and show off regional culture.

Celebrations on Parliament Hill in Ottawa marked the country's largest party. Irish dancers and fiddlers graced downtown St. John's as Newfoundland was the first province to celebrate the national holiday.

Montrealers waved Canadian flags and cheered as marching bands, pipers, colourful floats, acrobats and folk dancers carried the downtown parade.

A bouquet of Quebecois musical acts also took to stages throughout Old Montreal and on Quebec City's Plains of Abraham, setting the stage for fireworks.

In Edmonton, new Canadians raised their right hand to recite an oath pledging allegiance on the legislative grounds.

"For me, it's a great thing and we're very grateful for this opportunity of becoming a Canadian citizen," said Mark Martinez, who was part of the Canada Day ceremony. "A lot of people in the Philippines tried to do whatever it takes to come here."

Residents in Iqaluit, Nunavut, the northernmost capital city in Canada, were treated to a pancake breakfast and traditional dancing as the territory observed its eighth year in existence.

On the West Coast, Vancouver's scenic Alexandra Park played host to Arabic, Persian, and Indian song and dance to kick off the multicultural city's festivities.

Signs suggest end to Afghan mission; Harper says future commitment is up to Canadians, and we're not keen

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COLUMN: Paul Willcocks
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Harper: No mission if public opposed.;
BYLINE: Paul Willcocks
SOURCE: Special to Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 770

Until now, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has talked as if a Conservative government would automatically extend the military mission in Afghanistan when the current commitment ends in February 2009. Canadians don't cut and run, maintained Harper, and we'll be there until the job — whatever that might be — is done.

Harper has just changed his position. The troops will only stay if Canadians support military action against Afghan insurgents, he said. "I don't want to send people into a mission if the opposition at home is going to undercut the dangerous work that they're doing in the field," he said.

It might be that Harper was just worried about politics — that his concern was with the positions that the opposition parties in Parliament might take on the war.

But that seems a narrow interpretation of the comments. It seems fairer to recognize that his concern extended to the broader principle that governments should not send troops into battle if the public does not believe the mission is justified.

So unless Canadians say that they support a continuation of the current mission, our front-line combat role will end in about 20 months.

Most opinion polls suggest that Harper should tell NATO now that Canada won't be fighting after 2009. We might be willing to offer humanitarian aid, but Canadians don't want to see our troops to continue to take a combat role.

A national Decima Research poll conducted at the beginning of June found two out of three Canadians want the troops out of the fighting when this commitment ends. The main reason appears to be that the public has decided lives are being lost for no reason; 75 per cent of those surveyed did not believe our effort will produce real change in Afghanistan. Canadians aren't a huge part of the NATO commitment — 2,500 out of some 31,000 troops. But we've taken on a tough combat role, one shunned by many of the other participating nations.

So what do we tell Harper about extending the mission? There's no doubt that Canada's efforts have made a positive difference in the lives of some Afghanis. Women point to freedoms that would never have been imaginable under the Taliban. And the mission's goals — supporting the government, preventing terrorists

Signs suggest end to Afghan mission; Harper says future commitment is up to Canadians, and we're not keen

from using Afghanistan as a safe haven, helping improve the lives of citizens — are all laudable.

But that's not enough to justify sacrificing more lives. There has to be not just a noble cause, but also a realistic chance of success. Increasingly, that appears unlikely.

The NATO forces have stepped in to the middle of a civil war. The Taliban are the bad guys — violent, repressive, tyrannical and supporters of terrorism outside Afghanistan's borders.

But the government has a shaky claim to legitimacy. The police and army are at best inefficient and poorly equipped. At worst they are corrupt and criminal. The gap between our ideal of bringing democracy to Afghanistan and the reality of life on the ground is enormous.

And the country remains so desperately poor — comparable to the most struggling countries in Africa — that it is difficult to see how, even with significant aid, it can provide the basic services and institutions needed.

At the same time, it appears there is no end to the military struggle in sight. The Taliban is waging a classic insurgency campaign. It attacks when conditions are in its favour and fades away when the NATO forces are strong, only to return once attention shifts elsewhere.

The most recent Canadian deaths came in an area our forces thought they had won control. There is no quick victory over that kind of enemy.

And any hope of success relies on winning the support of the civilian population and demonstrating that the government and the foreign forces can ensure their security.

That's increasingly difficult. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has complained that NATO forces' reliance on air strikes and artillery to fight the guerrillas is resulting in too many civilian deaths. The best estimate is that NATO forces have killed 203 civilians so far this year; the Taliban 178. It doesn't matter whether the Taliban are using innocents as shields; they are still dead.

Harper says the future of the military mission is up to Canadians. Given the terrible costs and the slim chance of success, the choice is clear. NATO should be told now that while Canada might help with aid, training and other support, our military role won't continue.

Footnote: Why did Harper change his position? The war has become a larger political issue, particularly in Quebec. The death toll is rising and there is no good news to offset the public concerns. The Conservatives risk facing an election in which their support for the war is a significant — and damaging — issue.

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CIA's follies a warning about Canadian spies

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BYLINE: Iain Hunter
SOURCE: Special to Times Colonist
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The declassification and release of the Central Intelligence Agency's "Family Jewels" last week isn't likely to rate as the story of the year.

There were, in this compendium of wrongdoing by the CIA as far back as the 1950s, a few references to experiments with mind-control drugs and assassination attempts and plans against Fidel Castro and others.

But a lot of the documents had to do with old news, like Watergate, and boring domestic stuff, like how to dispose of classified trash.

What might interest Canadians is that it reminded us how a spy agency set up to operate abroad can become involved in escapades that are far outside its mandate. It showed how the CIA involved itself in operations with domestic political implications — Watergate being the most instantly recognizable.

In the last election campaign, the Conservatives under Stephen Harper said they'd set up what sounded a lot like a Canadian CIA.

Last month, though, Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day said the government thinks setting up a separate agency to operate abroad would be too expensive and take too long, given the need to train agents. Instead, the mandate of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service is to be expanded to allow our spies to operate covertly abroad.

This is precisely what the McDonald Commission, set up to inquire into Mountie wrongdoing in the 1970s, advised against in its report that led up to the founding of CSIS in 1984. It wanted the two functions kept separate.

It warned that CSIS would be exposed to "contagion" by an espionage agency's practice of breaking the laws of other countries. It also said the kind of intelligence a foreign spy network collected "would go well beyond the purpose of security intelligence."

Spreading disinformation abroad, as the Chinese do about the Falun Gong in Canada, is relatively benign compared to assassinating foreign leaders to aid investors abroad or serve the interests of political ideology.

Of course there are those, like former CSIS director Ward Elcock, who have argued the agency already has the mandate to operate abroad and that the only thing limiting its capabilities is lack of funding.

He said that CSIS has an international mandate and that he could collect intelligence "wherever I need to."

Perhaps it was natural that he should fudge the issue to try to protect his turf, but it's pretty clear that CSIS agents shouldn't be skulking about the world in disguises, willy-nilly: They can help Foreign Affairs bring back Canadian citizens from Lebanon, support our military's effort in Afghanistan, or visit, openly, with other countries' agents; otherwise they must stay home. At least this is what we're told the law says.

The current director, Jim Judd, acknowledges CSIS lacks the authority to deploy covert agents abroad, though he regrets it. He says that countries like New Zealand and the Netherlands have their own espionage agencies and that spies from 20 or so countries are operating in Canada.

It might be, of course, that we don't really know what's going on. People trained to operate surreptitiously in presumably high causes may not feel unduly constrained by statute: We have only to see how the Mountie security service operated after the October 1970 crisis in Quebec — burning barns, kidnapping people, stealing dynamite, mounting disinformation campaigns, bugging cabinet ministers — to realize that.

Maybe the security intelligence review committee, set up to oversee CSIS and report to Parliament, hasn't the handle on the agency that it should.

But nobody should be under the illusion that a legally sanctioned foreign spy agency doesn't break the law — those of countries in which they operate abroad or international ones — and commit what would be called crimes in Canada.

A lot of espionage and counter-espionage is pretty boring stuff, but occasionally things can get close to James Bond's fantasy world. Sometimes someone might have to carry an umbrella with a poison-dipped point.

One of the reasons the McDonald Commission wanted the RCMP out of the spy business was a typically Canadian concern that those enforcing the law shouldn't be breaking it. It argued that there should be an impregnable bulwark between CSIS people looking after national security here and any outfit that might be committing illegal mayhem abroad.

Yet as Air India and Maher Arar's case have shown, there's a real problem of a lack of communication when police and security agencies operate in what the jargon calls "silos." This may be due to individual stupidity or dereliction of duty, but allowing agencies to operate in unsplendid isolation compounds the problem.

It will be some time before Canada is a big player in international espionage, but in hunting down those who would bomb Canadian facilities and murder Canadians our agents should not be confined to our shores.

But when they break someone else's law we should know it's for our security and not for some sordid political objective.

Our respect for the law should be stirred, not shaken.

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Afghan investigation finds 62 Taliban, 45 civilians killed in southern battle

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KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS

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WORD COUNT: 391

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP) _ An investigation into air strikes that slammed into Afghan homes where Taliban fighters sought shelter found that 62 insurgents and 45 civilians were killed, two Afghan officials said Sunday.

An investigating team was sent to Helmand province's Gereshk district, where fighting took place between insurgents and Western forces late Friday, said Dur Ali Shah, the mayor of Helmand province's Gereshk district, and Mohammad Hussein Andewal, the provincial police chief.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force has acknowledged some civilians were killed in the southern battle but has said the death toll was nowhere near as high as Afghan officials have claimed.

Because of the battle site's remote location, it was impossible to independently verify the casualty claims. Afghan officials said fighter jets and ground forces were still patrolling the region and that the fighting continued into Saturday.

Meanwhile, a suicide attacker on foot blew himself up near a convoy of British forces in Gereshk district on Sunday, wounding several Afghans, an Associated Press reporter at the scene said.

The battle on Friday began when Taliban fighters tried to ambush a joint U.S.-Afghan military convoy, then fled to Hyderabad village for cover, said Helmand provincial Police Chief Mohammad Hussein. Air strikes then targeted the militants in the village.

Shah said late Saturday that 50 to 60 civilians and 35 Taliban fighters had been killed but changed his casualty figures on Sunday, citing the investigation.

Maj. John Thomas, a spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force, said the military had no information ``to corroborate numbers that large." He said NATO would not fire on positions if it knew civilians were nearby.

``It's the enemy fighters who willingly fire when civilians are standing right next to them," he said.

Civilian deaths have infuriated Afghans. President Hamid Karzai has condemned the forces for carelessness and viewing Afghan lives as ``cheap." He also has blamed the Taliban for using civilians as human shields.

The U.S.-led coalition said the air strikes were in response to attacks on a joint Afghan-coalition patrol.

``It appears that ANA (Afghan National Army) and coalition forces fired at clearly identified firing positions," said Maj. Chris Belcher, a coalition spokesman. ``Remains of some people who apparently were civilians were found among insurgent fighters who were killed in firing positions in a trench line."

Belcher accused militants of hiding among civilians.

Hyderabad resident Mohammad Khan said the airstrikes killed seven members of his family, including his brother and five of his brother's children.

Villagers were burying a ``lot of dead bodies" Saturday, he said by telephone.

Harper's Canada Day message: This country's back

DATE: 2007.07.01
KEYWORDS: POLITICS SOCIAL
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 871

OTTAWA (CP) _ As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill that Canada is once again a player on the world stage.

He delivered a brief state-of-the-nation address whose cheerful tone was in stark contrast to the sombre, overcast skies that loomed overhead as he took the stage before 35,000 people.

Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower, he said.

“The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back,” Harper told the crowd Sunday.

“Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage. . . Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour.”

His upbeat message was heard by thousands who braved the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the milestone birthday celebration in the nation's capital.

He said Canada has been blessed by God _ with its wealth of natural resources _ and been blessed by the presence of its dynamic people.

“From the natural wealth of the land that God created to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all nations of the Earth,” he said, “we are a country that has been truly blessed.”

Harper delivered that message after arriving on the hill with his wife and children, as a 21-gun military salute opened a noontime show under a dark and cool 14C sky.

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 new Canadians at a citizenship ceremony at Rideau Hall.

She reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: hope and freedom. She lauded Canadian soldiers seeking to spread those same values in Afghanistan.

Jean fled Haiti as a refugee after her father was badly beaten by the Duvalier regime.

“I know the value of this liberty,” Jean said.

“We should never take for granted how lucky we are to be able to think, to say, to choose, to act, to live in complete liberty while barbarism and misery afflict so many other countries.”

At roughly the same moment, a Rwandan refugee was among 99 people preparing to become a Canadian at a citizenship ceremony in Edmonton.

Pauline Mukashema described fleeing her home to the sound of gunshots and gangs approaching, as her native country degenerated into a wave of genocidal violence in 1994.

All she brought with her were five photographs and some clothing. After years living in other African countries, she moved with her parents and siblings to Canada in 2003.

“It was a dream to come to Canada,” said Mukashema, now 25.

“The one thing that always (stopped) me is, ‘You don’t have an identity. You’re a refugee, you don’t have anything.’ . . . Now that I’m a Canadian, I’m able to travel, I’m able to vote, I’m able to really make things happen.”

“It’s home now.”

In Ottawa, Jean and the prime minister worked the crowd, with the governor general warmly clasping hands and exchanging words with dozens of audience members.

Harper’s speech drew polite applause.

The biggest crowd reaction came when the Canadian Forces’ flying Snowbirds fanned out across the sky above the Peace Tower in perfect synchronicity with the dramatic final notes of O Canada.

While those skies were mostly grey, there was a considerable amount of blue on stage.

The traditional red and white could be seen everywhere _ on flags, as part of peoples’ clothing, and on a giant stage set up beneath the Peace Tower as the centrepiece of the festivities.

But an Ottawa radio station called for a boycott of the festivities in protest against the Conservative party colours being plastered on the giant “Canada” sign above the main stage.

“Show your support for Canada by avoiding Parliament Hill and its festivities,” said an online statement by station Hot 89–9.

“There are hundreds of things to do besides attending this bizarre display of ‘patriotism.’ If you do attend, you’ll be left feeling blue.”

A competing radio personality did not mince his words in criticizing the proposed boycott.

“How stupid is that,” said Lowell Green, a conservative talk show host at competing CFRA.

“What, are we going to boycott the blue of the skies, too? There’s red there, too (on the stage). There’s as much red as there is blue.”

“What the hell are they talking about?”

There was also plenty of blue on the periphery of Parliament Hill _ in the police uniforms visible everywhere as the security presence had been visibly stepped up.

At least three RCMP officers stood guard at each entrance point to the hill, checking purses, bags and backpacks as revellers made their way to the lawns in front of the Centre Block.

There were also police officers and security cameras installed around the nearby War Memorial with its Tomb

of the Unknown Soldier.

Young party-goers ignited a national scandal by urinating on the monument during last year's event.

In Montreal, thousands lined the streets for a parade Sunday that featured a multicultural celebration and even a political statement.

This political statement, however, had nothing to do with the decades-old nationalist tug-of-war between Quebec and Canada.

It had to do with the Atlantic seal hunt. Draped only in Canadian flags, a man and woman from Concordia University who denounced the hunt were invited to join the parade.

"One of the beauties about being Canadian is you can do whatever you want on that day," said parade-watcher Bob Hutchings.

"They are part of the parade because Canada lets you protest."

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Danny Williams reflected on the anniversary of the First World War Battle of Beaumont Hamel.

During a wreath-laying ceremony in St. John's, the premier announced plans to unveil plaques commemorating the hundreds of Newfoundland men killed during the war.

"We must always appreciate that they paid for our freedom with their lives," Williams said in a statement.

"In a small and symbolic way, we will finally bring these soldiers home."

The bronze plaques will be replicas of ones found at a memorial in France. They will be unveiled next July 1.

In Halifax, hundreds gathered under sunny skies at the historic Citadel site to eat birthday cake and watch a foot-and-arms drill by the 78th Highlanders.

Bart Snell of Dartmouth, a retired master seaman in the navy, paused for a moment when asked what Canada Day meant to him.

"I served 25 and a half years in the military," Snell said.

"It means being able to have Canada Day peacefully ... no matter what race or nationality you are."

For Becca MacAulay, summing up the day's meaning was especially simple.

MacAulay turned six years old Sunday.

She said it felt "good" to share her birthday with the entire country.

Troops in Afghanistan celebrate Canada Day with barbecue, couple `cool ones'

DATE: 2007.07.01

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 412

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) _ A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield on Sunday as hundreds swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Gone were the digitized uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian. Soldiers and support employees alike tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes the military's work here in favour of some pure Canadian spirit.

“It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this,” said Cpl. James Nickerson, 34, of Canso, N.S., as he strolled the boardwalk at the airfield decked out with strings of Canadian flags on the banister. Bigger flags hung from the ceiling.

“Now if it could only just snow.”

Indeed, one of the only regular things about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the soldiers and civilians who took part in organized activities at the sprawling airfield where international troops are based.

The other fixture was the line at Tim Hortons, where even soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing the best of the day to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of the reality TV show *Amazing Race* in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

“For me, it's just a great representation of our contribution over here,” said Sgt. Andy Smith, 42, based out of Petawawa, Ont.

“When you see all the soldiers and all the civilian staff we have here taking part and helping run the events and participating in the events, it's awesome.”

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar will gather for a barbecue and the real prize of the day _ two cold beer.

Many soldiers had packed away some red-and-white specifically for Canada Day and the costumes were out in full force, from tall “Cat-in-the-Hat” striped red and white, to polka-dot dresses and Maple Leaf ties.

At a table handing out free donuts and coffee, soldiers grabbed up Maple Leaf pins and flags, and chased each other around trying to stick on temporary flag tattoos.

For many of the Canadians on the ground, July 1 is more than Canada's birthday _ it also marks the start of the last month of their tour of duty.

It's been a hard six months _ 16 soldiers have been killed since the current rotation arrived in February.

Side-stepping an impromptu water fight, Sgt. Steven Gardiner said Canada Day in Afghanistan was partly about them.

“This is to celebrate what they gave up,” said Gardiner, a reservist from Hamilton.

“The freedom they're giving the Afghan people.”

INDEX:International, Social, Defence

DATE: 2007.07.01

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 124

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – The brown and green of Canadian uniforms is being traded for red and white as soldiers celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Around the boardwalk in Kandahar, troops have gathered to take advantage of free Tim Hortons coffee and doughnuts and get plastered with Canada Day tattoos.

Corporal Rob Walker from CFB Petawawa says he's only been in Kandahar for five days, so it's nice to have some Canadian spirit to ease the transition.

Even soldiers from other countries have got into the Canada Day spirit, waving flags and wishing their comrades the best of the day.

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar will gather for a barbecue and the real prize of the day – two cold beer.

The current rotation of soldiers in Afghanistan is set to leave at the end of this month.

(BN)

Soldier–Funerals

DATE: 2007.07.01

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 115

While most Canadians celebrate the Canada Day weekend, family and friends in three segments of the country are mourning the recent deaths of loved ones in Afghanistan.

Funeral services were held yesterday for Sergeant Christos Karigiannis in Quebec, Corporal Stephen Bouzane in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Private Joel Wiebe in Alberta.

The latest Canadian military casualties in the Afghan conflict were members of the Edmonton–based Third–Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

They were killed on June 20th when their unarmoured vehicle — known as a Gator — was struck by a roadside bomb west of Kandahar as they travelled between two checkpoints.

Their deaths have prompted the Canadian military to suspend the use of the open–top, six–wheeled Gators outside secure compounds.

(CP)

ml

Canada Day–Governor General

DATE: 2007.07.01

KEYWORDS: SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 88

OTTAWA — Governor General Michaëlle Jean is reminding Canadians of what a special place they have to call home.

In her Canada Day message, the Governor General says Canadians should not take for granted the freedoms they enjoy, including the freedom to say what they think without fear of repercussion, or to walk down the street without fear.

She says Canadians have a responsibility to ``spread" this freedom.

She says the commitment of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan is an excellent example of how Canada is fostering freedom and hope around the world.

(BN)

mcw

TOR OUT YYY

DATE: 2007.07.01
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 249

It's party time across Canada, which marks its 140th birthday today.

Thousands are expected on Parliament Hill, where the main party will include music, a fly-past by the Snowbirds, and fireworks.

Among those in attendance will be Stephen Harper.

The prime minister says more than almost anything else, Canada is defined by the vast Arctic, which he says symbolizes the country's great untapped promise. (3)

(Britain Airport Crash) (Audio: 6)

The airport in Glasgow, Scotland reopened this morning after what authorities are treating as a terrorist attack.

It happened yesterday when two men rammed a burning S-U-V into a terminal.

The two suspects were arrested, along with two men in northern England.

As a followup, police searched several homes near Glasgow Airport this morning.

Police say the attack is linked to two car bombs that were defused in central London on Friday. (3)

(Ottawa Slayings)

Police in Ottawa are saying little about a weapon, motive, or suspects in a triple murder.

The bodies of a man, his wife, and a neighbour were found yesterday in a posh, high-security condo in the city's east end.

Sun Media quotes neighbours as saying the male victim is 77-year-old Alban Geron.

He retired three years ago after spending 20 years as a judge with the Tax Court of Canada. (3)

(Afghanistan)

Reports suggest the death toll from a battle in southern Afghanistan on Friday is worse than initially thought.

Afghan officials say 62 Taliban fighters and 45 civilians were killed in Helmand province when NATO planes blasted homes where the Taliban sought shelter.

NATO won't say how high the death toll is, although the alliance says it's not as big as Afghan officials claim. (3)

(Que Moving Day)

More than 100–thousand apartments will change hands in Quebec on this, the province's biggest moving day of the year.

In 1973, the Quebec government decided that leases should begin on July 1st.

The idea was to make sure children won't have their school year disrupted by a move. (3)

(MUSIC–Diana–Concert)

A day–long concert honouring the late Diana, Princess of Wales, is about to get started at Wembley Stadium in London.

Rod Stewart and Elton John are some of the performers at the event, which will draw a worldwide T–V audience.

Today would have been Diana's 46th birthday.

She was killed in a car crash in Paris in August of 1997. (3)

(NewsWatch by Bill Marshall)

Activists learn the ropes; Canadian program teaches rights workers from strife-torn nations how to train others

IDNUMBER 200707020081

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Ont

SECTION: News

PAGE: A02

ILLUSTRATION: IAN BARRETT for the toronto star Equitas director Ian Hamilton, left, with students Khan Agha Dawoodzai, Augustine Mukaro and Sayran Ahmed. ;

BYLINE: Sean Gordon

SOURCE: Toronto Star

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 677

The verdant precincts of John Abbott College are mostly overrun with grade-school day campers these days, but over in the residence hall the cafeteria is packed with a group of highly unusual pupils.

They number 130 in all – and some had an easier time than others getting to what is a unique summer school for adults.

One braved the journey from insurgent-wracked Baghdad to Jordan, only to be turned back by jumpy immigration officials, and eventually made his way to Canada via Syria.

Another made a 25-hour trek from Zimbabwe to South Africa, then to England, New York, Toronto, and finally on to Montreal.

If the group is gathered here, at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Outaouais rivers, it's because Equitas, formerly known as the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, is doing a very Canadian thing.

The seminars at John Abbott are part of a three-week program to train fledgling activists from strife-torn countries on how to set up groups, promote human rights, and train humanitarian workers.

In other words, Equitas is training the trainers.

"This is a dream for me, as an Iraqi woman, to be here," said Sayran Ahmed, a Kurd from the oil-rich, ethnically diverse city of Kirkuk who is executive director of the Kurdistan Relief Association.

Ahmed, 42, is a civil engineer by trade but she became involved in human rights work when her country was besieged by economic sanctions in the 1990s.

"This is a unique program, for many reasons ... it's a complete program, it gives us experience in human rights education, promotion, fundraising and transferring skills to people in our own culture and communities," she said.

Though she comes from the comparatively stable north of Iraq, Ahmed said her organization – which is focused on children's rights – is finding it hard to raise money and to get into the chaotic areas where it is needed most.

"Security is the main challenge. For a month, there will be no attacks. And then in one day, there will be six bombs. It's not safe, you don't know who your enemy is," she said, adding that "NGOs (non-governmental agencies) are a new concept in Iraq, so is civil society."

Augustine Mukaro, the 36-year-old treasurer of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, is part of an organization trying to take on the ruthlessly repressive regime of Robert Mugabe.

"We're working on promoting freedom of expression, a reform of repressive laws that control the media ... we can borrow from other countries and I wanted to exchange experiences with other people," said Mukaro, who is also a political reporter for the Harare-based Independent weekly.

"This course equips us with a new scope of understanding of the challenges other people face in other countries, and equips you with survival strategies," he said, adding the lobbying techniques he has learned in the course should prove useful.

Ian Hamilton, Equitas' Toronto-born executive director, calls the program a unique contribution to human rights education.

"A lot of human rights training is one-off – here's a technique, now go home and do it – but our approach is to link people not only from different countries, but within their home country," Hamilton said. "We've got a pretty good alumni network, and an online community so people can exchange ideas and ask questions."

The non-profit group, which was founded by a coalition of academics, advocates and diplomats, celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. The training program, originally aimed at human rights lawyers, is now in its 28th year.

"What's amazing and restores faith in humanity is the level of optimism and perseverance you see despite often horrible circumstances," Hamilton said.

"People realize they're not alone in dealing with these issues, and the real richness is the fact we have 130 people from 60 countries here."

It's become an annual rite in this WASPy town west of Montreal to see an influx of people from the eastern Congo, say, or Armenia or Afghanistan. The bucolic setting makes it all the more jarring to hear participants talk about the starkness of their challenges.

"A lot of our work is in schools, to convince teachers that children have rights, and to tell the children that violence is not normal," said Khan Agha Dawoodzai, 44, program director of the Afghan Bureau for Reconstruction and Development. "Things are going a bit better, but still we have a very poor record for human rights in my country. The government doesn't have the capacity to fulfill its obligations ... but at least now we're starting to build some institutions. I want to help build more."

Wall honouring Iraq war dead 'work in progress'; As the U.S. death toll in Iraq and Afghanistan climbs, memorial runs out of space for names

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DATE: 2007.07.02

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PAGE: AA01

ILLUSTRATION: A dedication ceremony is held at Washington's "Wall of the Fallen" in June last year. The last name added to the memorial was in January. ;

BYLINE: Tim Harper

SOURCE: Toronto Star

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WORD COUNT: 585

The long narrative of America's 21st-century wars starts with the October 2001 death of Master Sgt. Evander E. Andrews, who perished in an accident in Qatar while the twin towers still smouldered.

It weaves its way through 63 more months of loss, to the tribute to Sgt. Jonathan Kingman, who died last January when his vehicle drove over an explosive device in Iraq.

And then it stops.

In a grim reminder of a steadily mounting death toll, the Wall of the Fallen in the Rayburn Building ran out of space.

Even in the largest congressional office building in the U.S. capital, named for a powerful House Speaker from the boundless plains of Texas, there is not enough room on the designated wall to memorialize all those who have died in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It has become something of an embarrassment in the halls of the U.S. Congress, as legislators, tourists and congressional staffers walk through the metal detectors, glance to their left at the memorial, and puzzle at a wall that somehow suggests that these seemingly endless wars came to an abrupt halt on a frosty day at the beginning of this year.

It is also symbolic, a daily reminder of a death toll that no one had foreseen and, inevitably, a battle zone for Democrats and Republicans. In the capital of a country that memorializes its previous war dead in sprawling open spaces, in shrines like the Vietnam Memorial or Arlington Cemetery, there are few ongoing memorials to those who are dying daily in wars that have been going on for almost six years.

There are, in fact, few daily reminders of the war away from the ongoing debates in the legislative chambers and the daily names of the dead published in daily newspapers.

There is no draft, no collective national sacrifice to drive home the daily cost of war to those who do not have children or spouses or mothers and fathers fighting and dying in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Since Kingman, a 21-year-old from small-town Ohio whose online moniker was "jokingman," was added to the wall, about 500 more Americans have died in Iraq.

The death toll was 101 for June – 126 died in May, 104 in April, 81 in March and 80 in February.

The death toll in Iraq now stands at 3,578.

Fifty Americans died in Afghanistan while the congressional leadership mulled what to do about their full wall.

That U.S. death toll now stands at 407.

Inexplicably, the wall was built to hold 3,500 names.

Initially, there was a plan to shrink the type used for the names, but the cost – more than \$10,000 – was deemed prohibitive.

Now, this week, as this country heads to beaches, barbecues and shopping malls to celebrate its freedom on July 4, congressional staffers will quietly begin a second wall, finding room for 800 more names of young Americans who have given their lives in two wars as their legislators continue to fruitlessly try to debate their way out of the conflicts.

They will include names of those who died as far back as November 2006, through May of this year.

The names are not necessarily posted in chronological order because of a painstaking process used to determine the correct spelling of the deceased, proper hometown and cause of death.

"There will be no ceremony. There has never been an installation ceremony," said Jeff Ventura of the House of Representatives administrative office.

"Both these walls have always been a work in progress."

It also has symbolically become a wall that divides Republicans and Democrats.

"So sad," said William Delahunt, a Massachusetts Democrat.

Each day he walks by a memorial that reminds him "poignantly and ironically" that no one thought of how many more soldiers would die when the wall went up.

"It's just another example of how pathetically unprepared and unrealistic the supporters of this war have been," California Democrat Zoe Lofgren told her hometown newspaper.

Then the Republican leader in the House, John Boehner of Ohio, blamed the Democrats and implied they had decided to stop putting the names on the wall.

"Their sacrifices are no less worthy simply because one party prevailed in an election," he said, referring to the November 2006 mid-term vote.

The four placards that go up next week contain about 200 names each.

There will be no July 4 fireworks to mark the addition to the Rayburn Building.

Wall honouring Iraq war dead 'work in progress'; As the U.S. death toll in Iraq and Afghanistan climbs, mem

Afghan mission threatened; Suicide bombings, rising civilian death toll mar claims of stabilizing government, observers say

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PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
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EDITION: Ont
PAGE: AA02
BYLINE: Jason Straziuso
SOURCE: Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 513

U.S. and NATO commanders say they have blunted the Taliban's threatened spring offensive, killing almost 40 commanders and 2,000 insurgents. But suicide bombings and civilian deaths inflicted by international forces are both on the rise, threatening to derail the five-year mission to pacify and rebuild Afghanistan.

Six months into 2007, claims of progress in stabilizing the government of President Hamid Karzai are clouded by strains in the Western alliance and what analysts say is growing pessimism in NATO capitals. Five years after the Taliban's ouster, the militia is again a serious adversary, seizing control of swaths of the south, despite the presence of more NATO, U.S. and Afghan troops.

In a possible additional setback, U.N. and other Western officials expect this year's opium-producing poppy crop to exceed last year's record haul, mostly because of a spike in Helmand province, the world's largest poppy-growing region and also perhaps the most violent part of Afghanistan.

Two Afghan officials from Helmand yesterday said 45 civilians and 62 insurgents were killed by NATO and U.S. air strikes in their province Friday night. NATO admits some civilians were killed but says that estimate is too high. Karzai ordered a team to investigate.

The military insists increased fighting this year reflects their own more muscular approach. However, there is doubt that the bloodletting will pave the way for the Western-backed government to assert control over long-time Taliban strongholds and allow foreign troops to go home.

"I feel there is a growing air of pessimism, but I don't think there is anything inevitable about it," said Joanna Nathan, Afghanistan analyst for the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit research group. "I do not feel it's lost at all, but, at the same time, I feel it requires a hard look at the strategies here."

U.S. and NATO commanders say they quashed Taliban hopes of a spring blitz with offensive operations of their own, including an ongoing British-led effort in the southern province of Helmand. About 2,500 Canadian troops are serving in the country's south.

"There has been a spring offensive and I think it's been NATO's," U.S. Gen. Dan McNeill, the top NATO commander in Afghanistan, told The Associated Press this month.

The alliance had expected more bombings and suicide attacks, "but as to ground manoeuvre, a combination of fire and manoeuvre, more classic operations, the offensive has been NATO's," he said.

Afghan mission threatened; Suicide bombings, rising civilian death toll mar claims of stabilizing government, observers say

The U.S. and NATO say the insurgents' use of Iraq-style tactics is a sign of desperation – that the Taliban have lost 39 commanders, including their ruthless southern commander, Mullah Dadullah, and close to 2,000 fighters.

Other figures tell a different story.

In eastern Afghanistan, attacks were up 83 per cent during the first half of the year compared with the same period of 2006, according to the U.S. units that operate there.

Suicide bombings in the east roughly tripled, though military officers say the onslaught has been largely ineffective.

"If this is the spring offensive, things are going to be just fine," said U. S. Col. Martin P. Schweitzer, a NATO commander in the east.

Yet the Taliban have managed to kill 94 international troops and appear to have no difficulty finding recruits to make up for their losses.

Though the Afghan army is gaining strength, few believe it is close to being strong enough to protect the Western-backed government without foreign help.

; From Afghanistan to Parliament Hill, the Maple Leaf flew high as Canadians marked our 140th birthday

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DATE: 2007.07.02

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SECTION: News

PAGE: A01

ILLUSTRATION: FINBARR O'REILLY Reuters Cpl. Jeff Wright celebrates Canada Day by hanging the Maple Leaf on a mountainside above the forward operating base at Ma'sum Ghar, Afghanistan. Wright was also honouring his father, who served with the military in Bosnia and gave the flag to his son to take to Afghanistan. Stories, A14. ;

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WORD COUNT: 62

FINBARR O'REILLY Reuters Cpl. Jeff Wright celebrates Canada Day by hanging the Maple Leaf on a mountainside above the forward operating base at Ma'sum Ghar, Afghanistan. Wright was also honouring his father, who served with the military in Bosnia and gave the flag to his son to take to Afghanistan. Stories, A14.

Across the country, a 140th birthday to uplift spirits; Canada's international role makes it an 'amazing' country, PM says

IDNUMBER 200707020116
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A2
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Ottawa Citizen, CanWest News Service / Mahar Ammar,9, of Ottawa, watches the noon entertainment on Parliament Hill. ;
KEYWORDS: PARADES; CHRISTMAS; CHILD PSYCHOLOGY
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 495

OTTAWA — As Canada turned 140 Sunday, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean and Prime Minister Stephen Harper celebrated the nation's international role in making peace, fighting climate change, and even playing hockey — saying those efforts are what makes Canada an "amazing" country and world leader.

On Parliament Hill, thousands of people crowded the lawns to take in the day long festivities, which included a 21-gun salute, a fly-past by the Snowbirds, concerts and fireworks to cap the night.

"From hockey championships to humanitarian and military leadership roles in Afghanistan and Haiti, Canada is a citizen of the world and we can make our contribution a positive one," Harper said.

"We are a federation of 10 provinces and three territories more united than ever and our vision extends beyond three shores.

"From the natural wealth of the land that God created, to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all the nations of the earth, we are a country that has been truly blessed," Harper told the crowd of several thousand.

The Governor General used her Canada Day message to say Canadians have a responsibility to help those who suffer.

"We cannot overstate how lucky we are to be able to think, speak, choose, act, and live in complete freedom; not when barbarism and misery affect so many countries and people around the world," Jean said on Parliament Hill.

"I was born in a country that was under a merciless dictatorship, so like many Canadians who have come here from abroad, I know how precious that freedom really is," she said.

Across Canada, Canada Day celebrations promised to uplift spirits and show off regional culture.

Celebrations on Parliament Hill in Ottawa marked the country's largest party. Irish dancers and fiddlers graced downtown St. John's as Newfoundland was the first province to celebrate the national holiday.

Across the country, a 140th birthday to uplift spirits; Canada's international role makes it an 'amazing' country

Montrealers waved Canadian flags and cheered as marching bands, pipers, colourful floats, acrobats and folk dancers in ethnic costumes carried the parade as it moved along a major downtown thoroughfare, ending at Place du Canada, where a crowd-pleasing birthday cake was served.

A bouquet of Quebecois musical acts also took to stages throughout Old Montreal and on Quebec City's Plains of Abraham, setting the stage for fireworks.

In Windsor an estimated 50,000 people lined an avenue for a very cross-border Canada Day Parade.

It featured 45 entries from Michigan, Wisconsin, New York and Ontario and included the Lutheran Vanguard marching band from Wisconsin and the Canadian Cowgirls performing troop.

In Calgary a group of 140 new Canadians became citizens, each of the participants — who hailed from 39 countries as diverse as Algeria, Brazil, Somalia and Peru — represented one year in Canada's 140-year history at the citizenship ceremony. Meanwhile, more than 7000 people joined the Dominion Day celebrations at Heritage Park, while 1200 enjoyed a free pancake breakfast at the park.

Residents in Iqaluit, Nunavut, the northernmost capital city in Canada, were treated to a pancake breakfast and traditional dancing as the territory observed its eighth year of confederation.

Tens of thousands of revellers flocked to Canada Place on Vancouver's waterfront for free entertainment including concerts, magic shows and play areas for children. People also squeezed into Granville Island for a full day of free concerts and events.

Across the country, a 140th birthday to uplift spirits; Canada's international role makes it an 'amazing' country

Not quite your average celebration; At Kandahar Airfield, troops do their best to mark the day

IDNUMBER 200707020112
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A2
COLUMN: Don Martin
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Don Martin
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 529

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — It had all the essential elements of any Canada Day celebration.

Lots of Maple Leaf hats, shirts and flags while teams played games and music blared under a blazing summer sun.

Well, perhaps there were a few subtle differences.

The semi-automatic rifles and handguns over many shoulders were a tad unusual. Fighter jets screaming off the adjacent runway loaded with missiles to fire and bombs to drop gave the rock soundtrack an edge.

And this was undoubtedly the only 140-year-old birthday bash in the world where soldiers were checking out the party action from armored vehicles as they rumbled off to hazardous combat operations.

Then there was that nasty two-beer limit at the evening barbecue, strictly enforced by guys with more guns who wouldn't accept heat stress or dehydration to double the brew ration for medicinal purposes.

Canada Day celebrations at the Kandahar Air Field base took on an added exuberance this year. For most soldiers, the countdown has begun in earnest — they're in their final month of a 185-day deployment before they hand over control to the Van Doos from Quebec and head for home.

One view is unanimous and covers all military ranks — the grass is definitely greener on the Canadian side of this dusty deployment.

Capt. Colleen Rose hasn't been home since last September where her two young sons, aged four and six, have turned her husband into a single parent while she trained in -40 C degrees in Alberta before being deployed to 50 C temperatures in Afghanistan.

"You can't imagine what it's like being away that long. You can't put it into words. Only people who have lived it understand it," she says, while monitoring the start of the Kandahar Amazing Race she planned. "My husband says now that it's only a month before I get home to see the boys, he'll start putting the toilet seats back on."

"You miss your life. You miss being able to wear a tank top, for example," adds Cpl. Kristin Kuschnereit of Petawawa, Ont., who just got engaged last month while on leave.

"Personally, I find it hard to keep focused," admits Cpl. Shawn Fagan of Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick.

"Everything at home means Canada to me and I am standing here in the dust. But we have a job to do and we can't forget the bad guys we're up against won't let up."

There's a theory going around here that this deployment will start losing its bravado for battle as that departure date looms closer, the belief being that nobody wants to be the rotation's last ramp ceremony now that their return seats are booked.

That could translate into Canadian battle groups waiting for the Taliban to come to them instead of aggressively hunting down the enemy while they sleep outdoors in the grape fields and mountains to the south and west of here.

That may or may not be the case, but reports from the field show intensifying activity by the Taliban. "Contacts," which can mean anything from fired bullets to rocket grenade launches, are increasing and troops are still aggressively moving to strike down any insurgent activity.

And the possibility the Taliban would be shrewd enough to notice the Canadian holiday and attack on a vacation day when soldiers were distracted on base was cause for some anxiety here Sunday.

After all, the most deadly blow to this six-month deployment took place on Easter weekend this year when six soldiers with Five Platoon of the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment were killed by a mine buried in the road.

War of numbers over air strike's civilian death toll; ISAF official says less than a dozen; Afghan leaders say over 100

IDNUMBER 200707020106
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; BOMBINGS
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Reuters; with files from Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 422

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan and foreign officials were at odds on Sunday over the civilian death toll from a U.S.-led air strike that a local investigating team said killed more than 100 people.

Dor Mohammed Ali Shah, mayor of Grishnik in southern Helmand province, said Saturday's pre-dawn air strike on the small village of Hyderabad killed 45 civilians and 62 Taliban fighters.

But a spokesman for the NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) disputed the figures, saying fewer than a dozen civilians were killed.

"At this time we believe after our survey of the situation yesterday (Saturday) when the fighting ceased that there may be less than a dozen civilian dead," Major John Thomas said. ISAF rarely discloses its own tally of civilian deaths.

Thomas confirmed some of the dead included women and children. A "significant number of Taliban" were also killed, he said.

"Every single civilian casualty is one too many and we are very saddened by even that number," he said.

ISAF will work with the president's investigation and "we are not closing off the possibility that there may be a different conclusion," Thomas said.

The rising toll that fighting between a resurgent Taliban and foreign troops in Afghanistan is taking on civilians is proving a major irritant for Afghanistan's Western-backed President Hamid Karzai.

The Afghan government, rights groups and aid organizations say more than 300 have died this year, most in air strikes called in to support ground troops. The Taliban have also killed many civilians in suicide and roadside bomb attacks they say are aimed at foreign troops or collaborating Afghans.

ISAF argues the Taliban are also using civilians as human shields but critics say they are not doing enough to minimize casualties among ordinary people.

Dor Mohammed, appointed to head a preliminary local investigation into the air strike, insisted on Sunday that his toll was correct, but said it included victims believed to be still buried under the rubble of houses

War of numbers over air strike's civilian death toll; ISAF official says less than a dozen; Afghan leaders say

destroyed in the raid.

"We have found there are 45 civilians, with women, children and old people, and also 62 Taliban," he said.

Violence continued on Sunday, with a British soldier killed in a suicide bomb attack on a convoy of military vehicles in Grishnik, the district of Saturday's air strike, ISAF and local officials said.

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, police said Sunday they had busted a gang of pro-Taliban militants planning major terrorist attacks in the country as well as in Afghanistan.

An official statement released here said the militants "got training in Afghanistan in making explosive devices" and were "planning to carry out bomb blasts at several places in Lahore (Pakistan)." Earlier, a senior police official speaking on condition of anonymity said the militants during interrogation confessed that they were sending suicide bombers for attacks in Afghanistan.

Canadians across globe celebrate; Birthday cheers from Ottawa to Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200707020055
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B1 / FRONT
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: CanWest News photo / CANADA'S PARTY: Steve Gereke got to share a few words with Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Canada Day. ; Colour Photo: CanWest photo / SNOWBIRD SALUTE: Snowbirds fly past the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill Sunday. Millions of proud Canadians celebrated the country's birthday in Ottawa and around the world. ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 374

OTTAWA – As Canada turned 140 Sunday, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean and Prime Minister Stephen Harper celebrated the nation's international role in making peace, fighting climate change, and even playing hockey — saying those efforts are what makes Canada an "amazing" country and world leader. Half a world away, some Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan celebrated under the searing sun while others were checking out the party from armoured vehicles as they rumbled off to hazardous combat operations.

On Parliament Hill, thousands of people crowded the lawns to take in the day-long festivities, which included a 21-gun salute, a fly past by the Snowbirds, concerts and fireworks to cap the night.

"From hockey championships to humanitarian and military leadership roles in Afghanistan and Haiti, Canada is a citizen of the world and we can make our contribution a positive one," Harper said.

"We are a federation of 10 provinces and three territories more united than ever and our vision extends beyond three shores."

The prime minister said it is a time to celebrate our past and work toward our future.

"From the natural wealth of the land that God created, to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all the nations of the Earth, we are a country that has been truly blessed," Harper told the crowd of thousands.

"I believe that whether our ancestors came from the East, the West, or the South, as Canadians we always look to the North for the true definition of our country."

The governor general used her Canada Day message to say Canadians have a responsibility to help those who suffer.

"We cannot overstate how lucky we are to be able to think, speak, choose, act, and live in complete freedom; not when barbarism and misery affect so many countries and people around the world," Jean said on Parliament Hill.

"I was born in a country that was under a merciless dictatorship, so like many Canadians who have come here from abroad, I know how precious that freedom really is," she said.

Some of the soldiers celebrating in Afghanistan said Sunday they are excited about getting home soon, when their replacements take over.

"Personally, I find it hard to keep focussed," admits Cpl. Shawn Fagan of Canadian Forces Base Galetown, New Brunswick. "Everything at home means Canada to me and I am standing here in the dust. But we have a job to do and we can't forget the bad guys we're up against won't let up.

Communities say goodbye to three Canadian soldiers

IDNUMBER 200707020050
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B1 / FRONT
COLUMN: National Briefs
SOURCE: Windsor Star
WORD COUNT: 191

The day before Canada Day, red and white flags were draped over three caskets for the funerals of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

The bodies of Pte. Joel Wiebe, Sgt. Christos Karigiannis and Cpl. Stephen Bouzane were laid to rest Saturday, 10 days after their unarmoured Gator transport vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Kandahar.

All three had been due to leave Afghanistan in August.

Wiebe, 22, was eulogized at Trinity Lutheran Church in Edmonton, the same church he and his wife Anna Marie were to be married in, following his seven-month tour of duty.

His common-law wife, Anna Marie, issued a brief statement. "Although we are all very sad, we find strength in being together and the many fond memories we have of Joel."

In Montreal, eight members of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry slowly carried the remains of Karigiannis under sunny skies into a Laval church. The 31-year-old was a member of the Princess Pat's 3rd Battalion based in Edmonton.

The mood was just as sombre in the tiny town of St Patrick's, Nfld., 25 km southwest of Springdale, where Cpl. Stephen Bouzane was laid to rest.

Sacred Heart Church was filled to the walls, as was an army tent erected for an overflow crowd, as the community came together to say goodbye to Bouzane, 26.

Taste of home for our boys Laid-back chill of a long weekend at the cottage invades Kandahar base

SOURCETAG 0707020260

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 8

ILLUSTRATION: 4 photos by Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters and Stephanie Levitz, CP 1. Cpl. Rikk Lewis tosses a Frisbee to an Afghan National Army soldier during Canada Day festivities held at the forward operating base of Ma'sum Ghar in southern Afghanistan. 2. The quintessential Canadian moment: Gunner Sheldon Davis, left, Master Bombardier Brad Colwell, and Bombardier David Shea, pop a cap on a cold one at Kandahar air base yesterday. 3. A Maple Leaf adorns the butt of a Canadian weapon.

BYLINE: STEPHANIE LEVITZ, CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 380

A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield yesterday as hundreds of our guys swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Gone were the uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian. Soldiers and support staff tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes their work here in favour of some pure Canadian spirit.

"It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this," said Cpl. James Nickerson, 34, of Canso, N.S., as he strolled the boardwalk at the airfield decked out with Canadian flags. "Now if it could only just snow."

Indeed, one of the few things that was normal about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the activities at the sprawling airfield where international troops are based.

The other was the line at Tim Hortons, where soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing their best to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of the reality TV show *Amazing Race* in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

"For me, it's just a great representation of our contribution over here," said Sgt. Andy Smith, 42, based out of Petawawa. "When you see all the soldiers and the civilian staff we have here, it's awesome."

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar gathered for a barbecue and the real prize of the day — two cold beers.

Though surrounded by barbed wire and the drone of warplanes overhead, Canada House on the base had the

laid-back chill of a long weekend at the cottage.

Soldiers were all smiles as they hoisted a brew, one joking he wished every day could be Canada Day.

Most simply enjoyed the time to relax, aware that down time in Kandahar is a luxury.

"The guys that work outside the wire still have to go out, we still have a mission to do," said Cpl. Fred Trainor, 44, from Gagetown, N.B. "You can't let your guard down all the way. It's not over yet."

But for many of the troops, July 1 was the start of the last month of their tour of duty.

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, head of Canada's mission, said as he nears the end of his mission, he reflects on whether the values celebrated on July 1 are making an impact here.

"We're making progress, not as quick as some would like, but the fact is this is a better place now than it was when I got here eight months ago and I'm sure it will continue to be better." KEYWORDS=CANADA

Heroes laid to rest Family and friends say goodbye to 3 Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0707010546

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.07.01

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 8

1. photo by Andrew Vaughan, CP Kelly Bouzane, sister of Cpl. Stephen Bouzane, mourns at his grave yesterday in St. Patricks, Nfld. 2. photo by Dan Riedihuber, Reuters Pte. Joel Wiebe's family grieve as the soldier's casket is carried from the church in Edmonton. 3. photo by Peter McCabe, CP Sgt. Christos Karigiannis' mom Niki and brother Spiros leave his funeral service, above, in Laval, Que. 4. photo of CHRISTOS KARIGIANNIS "New stakes" 5. photo of STEPHEN BOUZANE "We love you" 6. photo of JOEL WIEBE "Wonderful"

BYLINE: MELANIE PATTEN, THE CANADIAN PRESS

WORD COUNT: 343

While Canadians prepared to celebrate Canada Day with concerts and parties, solemn celebrations of life took place across the country yesterday as families and friends said goodbye to three soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

Funeral services for Sgt. Christos Karigiannis, Cpl. Stephen Bouzane, a Scarborough native, and Pte. Joel Wiebe were held in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and Alberta, respectively.

"(Karigiannis) knew the stakes that lied ahead," Sgt. Dwayne Mac Dougall, who commanded troops alongside Karigiannis, said before the service in Laval, Que. "But (he was) more than willing to sacrifice and put his life down for his country and for any member of his section."

Verses of O Canada echoed from the open doors of Sainte-Rose-de-Lima Church as more than 500 mourners and military personnel came to remember the 30-year-old soldier.

Karigiannis, like Bouzane and Wiebe, was a member of the Edmonton-based 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The men were killed June 20 when their unarmoured vehicle, known as a Gator, was struck by a roadside bomb west of Kandahar as they travelled between two checkpoints.

The soldiers' deaths caused the Canadian military to suspend the use of the open-top, six-wheeler Gators outside secure compounds.

Master-Cpl. Emily Cavanaugh, a former trainee under Karigiannis, described the soldier as an inspiration. "It was his job and he loved it," she said, fighting back tears as she stood in front of the grey-bricked church. "He could have done anything he wanted and he chose this."

In Edmonton, more than 300 people, including 200 members of Princess Patricia's, shared memories of Wiebe during a private service at Trinity Lutheran Church.

Family members and his fiancée, Anna Thede, linked arms under sunny skies as his casket was carried into the church.

Capt. Mark Peebles read a statement from Thede, who had begun to affectionately call Wiebe her husband. "Family and friends gathered today to remember the wonderful man that Joel was and the life he had," he read. "Though we are all sad, we find strength in being together and the many fond memories we have of Joel."

Following the service, Bouzane's sister Kelly kissed her brother's casket and delivered an emotional message to soldiers still serving in Afghanistan.

"We love you, we're thinking of you. Come home safe to us," she said, clutching the Canadian flag that had draped her brother's casket. KEYWORDS=CANADA

A 'taste of home' Troops trade fatigues for red, white and beer

SOURCETAG 0707020414

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 7

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters Cpl. Jeff Wright puts up our flag — given to him by his father, who served in Bosnia — on a mountainside above the forward operating base of Ma'sum Ghar as part of July 1 festivities. Canadian flags were also displayed throughout Kandahar Airfield as troops celebrated what it means to be Canadian. 2 photos by Stephanie Levitz, CP 1. Gunner Sheldon Davis, Master Bombardier Brad Colwell and Bombardier David Shea enjoy a few cold ones at their Kandahar base. 2. Petawawa-based Capt. Jim Bacon cooks up a Canada Day feast fit for our troops in Afghanistan.

BYLINE: STEPHANIE LEVITZ, CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORD COUNT: 430

A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield as soldiers swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate our national birthday half a world away.

Gone were the digitized uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian.

Soldiers and support employees alike tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes the military's work here in favour of some pure Canadian spirit.

"It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this," said Cpl. James Nickerson, 34, of Canso, N.S., as he strolled the boardwalk at the airfield decked out with strings of Canadian flags on the banister. Bigger flags hung from the ceiling.

"Now if it could only just snow."

LINEUP AT TIM'S

Indeed, one of the only regular things about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the soldiers and civilians who took part in July 1 activities at the sprawling airfield.

The other fixture was the line at Tim Hortons, where even soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing the best of the day to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of Amazing Race in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

"It's just a great representation of our contribution over here," said Sgt. Andy Smith, 42, based out of Petawawa. "When you see all the soldiers and all the civilian staff we have here taking part and helping run the events and participating in the events, it's awesome."

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar gathered for a barbecue and the real prize of the day — two cold beer.

Soldiers were all smiles as they hoisted up their beer, one joking he wished every day could be Canada Day.

Most simply enjoyed the time to relax, aware that down time in Kandahar is a luxury.

For Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, head of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, Canada Day was a time to take pride in being Canadian. He quipped that while anyone could be on Parliament Hill for the holiday, only a chosen few could celebrate in Afghanistan.

"When we're at home for Canada Day we kind of take for granted the lifestyle that we live," he said. "When you're over here and you see how other people around the world live, it really drives home how lucky we are."

For many Canadians on the ground, July 1 is more than Canada's birthday — it also marks the start of the last month of their tour of duty.

Nearing the end of his mission, Grant reflected on whether the values celebrated on July 1 are making an impact in Afghanistan.

"We're making progress, not as quick as some would like," he said, "but the fact is this is a better place now than it was when I got here eight months ago and I'm sure it will continue to be better."

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Back on world stage Role in Afghanistan, natural resources make Canada a 'vital player,' PM says

SOURCETAG 0707020411

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 6

2 photos by Jonathan Hayward, CP, and Chris Wattie, Reuters Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean waves to the crowd as she arrives for Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill, where
ILLUSTRATION: Prime Minister Stephen Harper exchanged Canada Day greetings with some of the 35,000 people in attendance. The PM praised Canada's return to the world stage, while Jean — who fled war-torn Haiti — reminded Canadians to never take their freedom for granted.

BYLINE: CP

WORD COUNT: 325

"Canada's back."

That was Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Canada Day message to revellers on Parliament Hill.

The PM delivered a brief state-of-the-nation address whose cheerful tone was in stark contrast to the sombre, overcast skies that loomed overhead as he took the stage before 35,000 people.

Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, Harper said, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower.

"The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Harper told the crowd.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage ... Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour."

The PM's upbeat message was heard by thousands who braved the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the milestone birthday celebration in the capital.

WE'RE 'TRULY BLESSED'

Harper said Canada has been blessed by God — with its wealth of natural resources — and been blessed by the presence of its dynamic people.

"From the natural wealth of the land that God created to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all nations of the Earth," he said, "we are a country that has been truly blessed."

Harper delivered that message after arriving on the Hill with his wife and children, as a 21-gun military salute opened a noon-time show under a dark and cool 14C sky.

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 Canadians at a Rideau Hall citizenship ceremony.

Jean reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: Hope and freedom. She lauded Canadian soldiers seeking to spread those values in Afghanistan.

CHERISH YOUR LIBERTY

Jean fled Haiti as a refugee after her father was beaten by the Duvalier regime.

"I know the value of this liberty," Jean said.

"We should never take for granted how lucky we are to be able to think, to say, to choose, to act, to live in complete liberty while barbarism and misery afflict so many other countries."

Jean and the prime minister worked the crowd, with the governor general warmly clasping hands and exchanging words with the crowd.

The biggest reaction came when the Canadian Forces' flying Snowbirds fanned out across the sky above the Peace Tower in synchronicity with the final notes of O Canada.

While those skies were mostly grey, there was a considerable amount of blue in the area.

At least three Mounties stood guard at each entrance point to the Hill, checking purses, bags and backpacks.

There were also police officers and security cameras installed around the War Memorial after last year's urination spectacle. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Troops in Kandahar party Camouflage and uniforms are replaced by a host of T-shirts proclaiming national pride.

SOURCETAG: 0707020339

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A2

ILLUSTRATION: Stephanie Levitz, CP FEAST: Capt. Jim Bacon, from Petawawa, cooks up a feast for Canadian soldiers celebrating Canada Day in Kandahar, Afghanistan, yesterday. Soldiers were all smiles as they hoisted up their beer and traded best wishes.

BYLINE: STEPHANIE LEVITZ, CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORD COUNT: 319

A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield yesterday as hundreds swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Gone were the digitized uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian. Soldiers and support employees alike tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes the military's work here in favour of pure Canadian spirit.

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"Now if it could only just snow."

Indeed, one of the only regular things about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the soldiers and civilians who took part in organized activities at the sprawling airfield where international troops are based.

The other fixture was the line at Tim Hortons, where even soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing the best of the day to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of the reality TV show *Amazing Race* in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

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Most simply enjoyed the time to relax, aware that down time in Kandahar is a luxury.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Troops in Kandahar party Camouflage and uniforms are replaced by a host of T-shirts proclaiming 67 national

Canada a vital player on world stage, PM says

SOURCETAG 0707020335
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1
ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos 1. photo by Reuters CELEBRATING: Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean waves to the crowd as she arrives for Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill yesterday. 2. photo by Jonathan Hayward, CP Prime Minister Stephen Harper greets the crowd.
BYLINE: ALEXANDER PANETTA AND TERRY PEDWELL, CP
DATELINE: OTTAWA
WORD COUNT: 305

As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill Canada is again a player on the world stage.

The cheerful tone of his brief state-of-the-nation address contrasted with the sombre, overcast skies as he took the stage before 35,000 people.

Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower, he said.

"The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Harper told the crowd yesterday.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage."

"Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour," Harper said.

His upbeat message was heard by thousands who shrugged off the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the milestone birthday celebration in the nation's capital.

He said Canada has been blessed.

"From the natural wealth of the land that God created to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all nations of the Earth," he said, "we are a country that has been truly blessed."

Harper delivered that message after arriving on the hill with his wife and children, as a 21-gun military salute opened a noontime show under a dark and cool 14 C sky.

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 new Canadians at a citizenship ceremony at Rideau Hall.

She reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: hope and freedom. She lauded Canadian soldiers seeking to spread those same values in Afghanistan.

Jean fled Haiti as a refugee after her father was badly beaten by the Duvalier regime.

"I know the value of this liberty," Jean said.

"We should never take for granted how lucky we are to be able to think, to say, to choose, to act, to live in complete liberty while barbarism and misery afflict so many other countries."

Jean and the prime minister worked the crowd, with the governor general warmly clasping hands and exchanging words with dozens of audience members.

Harper's speech drew polite applause.

The biggest crowd reaction came when the Canadian Forces' flying Snowbirds fanned out across the sky above the Peace Tower in perfect synchronicity with the dramatic final notes of O Canada.

Security was visibly stepped up. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Civilian death toll disputed

SOURCETAG 0707020482

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 30

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 209

An investigation into air strikes that slammed into Afghan homes where Taliban fighters sought shelter found that 62 insurgents and 45 civilians were killed, two Afghan officials said yesterday.

An investigating team was sent to Helmand province's Gereshk district, where fighting took place between insurgents and Western forces late Friday, said Dur Ali Shah, the mayor of Helmand province's Gereshk district, and Mohammad Hussein Andewal, the provincial police chief.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force has acknowledged some civilians were killed in the southern battle but has said the death toll was nowhere near as high as Afghan officials have claimed.

Because of the battle site's remote location, it was impossible to independently verify the casualty claims. Afghan officials said fighter jets and ground forces were still patrolling the region and that the fighting continued into Saturday.

The battle began when Taliban fighters tried to ambush a joint U.S.-Afghan military convoy, then fled to Hyderabad village for cover, said Helmand provincial Police Chief Mohammad Hussein. Air strikes then targeted the militants in the village.

Shah said late Saturday that 50 to 60 civilians and 35 Taliban fighters had been killed but changed his casualty figures on Sunday, citing the investigation.

Maj. John Thomas, a spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force, said the military had no information "to corroborate numbers that large." **KEYWORDS=WORLD**

Harper upbeat

SOURCETAG 0707020476
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 23
ILLUSTRATION: photo by Chris Wattie, Reuters Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean inspects the guard during Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill in Ottawa yesterday.
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: OTTAWA
WORD COUNT: 156

As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill that Canada is once again a player on the world stage.

He delivered a brief state-of-the-nation address whose cheerful tone was in stark contrast to the sombre, overcast skies that loomed overhead as he took the stage before 35,000 people.

Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower, he said.

"The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Harper told the crowd yesterday.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage ... Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour."

His upbeat message was heard by thousands who braved the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the milestone birthday celebration in the nation's capital.

He said Canada has been blessed by God – with its wealth of natural resources – and been blessed by the presence of its dynamic people. KEYWORDS=CANADA

Red and white all over OUR TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN TAKE A DAY OFF FROM WAR TO FONDLY REMEMBER THEIR COUNTRY

SOURCETAG 0707020455

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 5

BYLINE: STEPHANIE LEVITZ, CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 423

A ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield as soldiers swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate our national birthday half a world away.

Gone were the digitized uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts proclaiming pride in everything Canadian.

Soldiers and support employees alike tossed aside the usual muted patriotism that characterizes the military's work here in favour of some pure Canadian spirit.

"It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this," said Cpl. James Nickerson, 34, of Canso, N.S., as he strolled the boardwalk at the airfield decked out with strings of Canadian flags on the banister. Bigger flags hung from the ceiling. "Now if it could only just snow."

Indeed, one of the only regular things about Canada Day in Kandahar was the scorching sun, beating down on the soldiers and civilians who took part in July 1 activities at the sprawling airfield.

The other fixture was the line at Tim Hortons, where even soldiers from other countries took delight in waving Canadian flags and wishing the best of the day to their Canadian comrades.

With beach volleyball, tug-of-war contests and an on-base version of Amazing Race in full swing, the airfield felt for a few hours like recess at junior high, the energy seemingly bounding off the walls of the floor-hockey rink.

"It's just a great representation of our contribution over here," said Sgt. Andy Smith, 42, based out of Petawawa. "When you see all the soldiers and all the civilian staff we have here taking part and helping run the events and participating in the events, it's awesome."

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar gathered for a barbecue and the real prize of the day – two cold beer.

Soldiers were all smiles as they hoisted up their beer, one joking he wished every day could be Canada Day.

Most simply enjoyed the time to relax, aware that down time in Kandahar is a luxury.

Red and white all over OUR TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN TAKE A DAY OFF FROM WAR TO FONDLY RE

For Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, head of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, Canada Day was a time to take pride in being Canadian. He quipped that while anyone could be on Parliament Hill for the holiday, only a chosen few could celebrate in Afghanistan.

"When we're at home for Canada Day we kind of take for granted the lifestyle that we live," he said.

"When you're over here and you see how other people around the world live, it really drives home how lucky we are."

For many Canadians on the ground, July 1 is more than Canada's birthday – it also marks the start of the last month of their tour of duty.

Nearing the end of his mission, Grant reflected on whether the values celebrated on July 1 are making an impact in Afghanistan.

"We're making progress, not as quick as some would like," he said, "but the fact is this is a better place now than it was when I got here eight months ago and I'm sure it will continue to be better."

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Canada's presence cheered Harper tells revellers nation standing tall on world stage

SOURCETAG 0707020554

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 18

ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo by Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters Canadian Cpl. Jeff Wright celebrates Canada Day by hanging his father's Canadian flag on a mountain above the forward operating base of Ma'sum Ghar in Afghanistan yesterday. 2. photo by Jonathan Hayward, CP Back in Canada, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean waves to the crowd as she arrives for Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill. 3. photo by Paula Kehoe, Sun Media Zahra Bell, 7, gives her hip grandfather, Louis Myers, 62, a hug as he shows his true colours. Myers and family were part of the Canada Day celebrations yesterday at Prince's Island Park. 4. photo of STEPHEN HARPER Lauds nation

BYLINE: CP

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 227

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Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower, he said.

"The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Harper said.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage. ... Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour."

He said Canada has been blessed by God — with its wealth of natural resources — and been blessed by the presence of its people.

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 new Canadians at a citizenship ceremony at Rideau Hall.

She reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: hope and freedom.

Meanwhile, a ray of red and white burst through the monochrome of army life at Kandahar Airfield yesterday as hundreds swapped their camouflage for Canadian colours to celebrate Canada Day in Afghanistan.

Gone were the uniforms with their flecks of brown and grey, replaced by a smorgasbord of T-shirts

proclaiming pride in everything Canadian.

"It's like finally getting a little taste of home, being surrounded by all this," said Cpl. James Nickerson, of Canso, N.S.

After an afternoon of sports events and contests, Canadians in Kandahar gathered for a barbecue and the real prize of the day — two cold beer. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Red-letter day for young girl Student's thoughts with soldier in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG: 0707020533

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 5

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Stuart Dryden, Sun Media Adel Jaghli, 2, managed to find the best seat in the house for the Canada Day fireworks at Olympic Plaza last night, as he takes in the show with his dad Ammar and mom Lamis.

BYLINE: TODD SAELHOF, SUN MEDIA

WORD COUNT: 323

Canada Day celebrations helped soothe the heart of a young Calgarian corresponding with a soldier in Afghanistan.

Mackenzie Meyer, 8, was among tens of thousands of Canadians celebrating the nation's 140th birthday yesterday at various parks throughout the city.

And with the help of mom and dad and twin sister Emma, the young girl was learning more about the freedoms of our country during a visit to Canada Day festivities at Prince's Island Park.

"It's really cool to write to a soldier — you kind of get to meet him," said Mackenzie, who was the only student involved in an elementary class project to receive a letter back from a Canadian soldier stationed in Afghanistan.

"I told him to make lots of friends over there and thank you for helping the world."

Since her correspondence with the Edmonton-based soldier, Mackenzie has always been sensitive to the deaths of Canadian personnel, hoping it's not the brave soul she's come to care about.

But yesterday's news was all about having family fun with her sister amid the food, games, activities and entertainment in the heart of Calgary.

"They're old enough that they're learning a little bit here today," said mom Deb of her daughters' first enjoyment of Canada Day festivities.

"We've been on that learning process about how lucky we are and how others in other countries aren't so lucky to be able to enjoy the freedoms we have."

In another part of the park, Greg Sturm was letting his freedoms run wild by being decked out in Canadian colours and the maple leaf from head to toe.

The Calgarian dubbed 'Captain Canada' — sporting a flag-painted face, two maple leaf tattoos, a flag as a cape, a patriotic tie, shirt and Viking hat and red and white shoes, socks and shorts — walked around Prince's Island handing out Canadian pins, flags and suckers.

"Every day I wear something with Canada on it," said Sturm, 38.

"But this is the day I can go all out and nobody can say anything about it."

The birthday celebrations were also held during the day at Fort Calgary, Tuxedo Park, Heritage Park and North Glenmore Park.

The party carried on deep into the evening with a fireworks display for Calgarians at Olympic Plaza.

It was enough fun on a hot, sunny day to bring families, like Charles Walkers', out in droves.

"It's just a nice family event to get them out and enjoy the day," said Walker, who was taking in the celebrations with wife Chona, five-year-old son Caleb and 19-month-old daughter Carmen.

"It's important they learn to appreciate the country they live in and realize how special it is to be able to come out here on a day like this.

"We should be thrilled we can enjoy this sort of celebration." KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Frontpage True Patriots Twins forge special bond with forces serving overseas

SOURCETAG 0707020523

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 1

ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo by Paula Kehoe, Sun Media Some fly flags. Some sing the national anthem with hand on heart. Twins Mackenzie and Emma Meyer, 8, show their patriotism by writing letters to Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. 2. photo of CORY SARICH FLAMES INK D-MAN Free-agent mayhem

WORD COUNT: 0

He loved a challenge, mourners say; Slain soldier. 'Nothing seemed too big for him'

IDNUMBER 200707020115

PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A6

Colour Photo: JOHN MORSTAD, THE GAZETTE / Relatives of Sgt.Christos

ILLUSTRATION: Karigiannis at Ste. Rose de Lima Church in Laval Saturday. Karigiannis, 31, was killed in Afghanistan on June 20. ;

BYLINE: RYAN BERGEN

SOURCE: The Gazette

WORD COUNT: 434

Tears ran down the soldier's cheeks for everyone to see. He could not wipe them away because his hands were full with the military decorations of Sgt. Christos Karigiannis.

And so, under the sun the tears sparkled on his face as he marched behind the flag-draped casket of his fallen brother in arms.

On a day that one parishioner said was meant for weddings, eight members of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry slowly carried the casket bearing the remains Sgt. Karigiannis, 31, into a Ste. Rose church in Laval on Saturday.

Karigiannis, from Laval, Cpl. Stephen Bouzane of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Pte. Joel Wiebe, of Alberta, were killed June 20 by an improvised explosive device west of Kandahar City in Afghanistan.

All three were members of the the Princess Pat's 3rd Battalion. Karigiannis was raised in Laval.

Soldiers stood guard between Karigiannis's family and the throngs of media, who were asked to stay outside during the memorial service.

"He was a humble man, fiercely proud of his profession" was some of what could be heard of the service offered in Greek, French and English from beyond the open doors.

Afterward, soldiers who knew Karigiannis described the challenges their friend was willing to confront.

"Nothing seemed to be too big for him to get around or to overcome," said Sgt. Dwayne Mac Dougall, who served in Canada with Karigiannis.

Mac Dougall said Karigiannis's successful completion of the physically and mentally gruelling United States Ranger training course was proof of his character and earned him ample respect from his fellow soldiers.

Karigiannis was also a member of the elite Skyhawks Canadian Forces parachutist team.

"He liked to have those challenges," said Kelly Spence, who supervised Karigiannis when he was a member

of the cadet instructors cadre. "We need more like Chris."

As a cadet, Karigiannis won the highest honour for the dedication he showed in his military training.

Spence said Karigiannis's commanding officers thought very highly of the young man. During the memorial service, Spence said, one of Karigiannis's past company commanders paid him the ultimate compliment by recalling how he had once thought, "One day, I'm going to be working for that guy."

"Warrant officers don't give out compliments," Spence explained, "they usually give out the opposite."

Stephanie Martin was a cadet with Karigiannis in the 1990s. She described him as "quiet and self-assured." She said the memory of him she cherishes is not the time they trained together, but when he saved a puppy from the pound that she was not able to rescue herself.

Karigiannis had been in Afghanistan since February.

The bomb that killed the men was planted in the Panjwail Valley, an area that was considered relatively safe. The three soldiers were shuttling supplies a short distance using a small, unarmoured all-terrain vehicle when the bomb detonated. Their deaths raised the number of Canadian troops killed in Afghanistan to 60.

This month, about 2,000 troops from Canadian Forces Base Valcartier will head to Afghanistan.

For now, Canadian Forces have been committed to stay in that country until 2009.

rbergen@thegazette.canwest.com

Rifles, tanks a giveaway: No ordinary Canada Day

IDNUMBER 200707020103
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A10
KEYWORDS: WAR
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: DON MARTIN
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 545

It had all the essential elements of any Canada Day celebration.

Lots of Maple Leaf hats, shirts and flags while teams played games and music blared under a blazing summer sun.

Well, perhaps there were a few subtle differences. The semi-automatic rifles and handguns over many shoulders were a tad unusual. Fighter jets screaming off the adjacent runway loaded with missiles to fire and bombs to drop gave the rock soundtrack an edge. And this was undoubtedly the only 140-year-old birthday bash in the world where soldiers were checking out the party action from armoured vehicles as they rumbled off to hazardous combat operations.

Then there was that nasty two-beer limit at the evening barbecue, strictly enforced by guys with more guns who wouldn't accept heat stress or dehydration to double the brew ration for medicinal purposes.

Canada Day celebrations at the Kandahar Air Field base took on an added exuberance this year. For most soldiers, the countdown has begun in earnest – they're in their final month of a 185-day deployment before they hand over control to the Van Doos from Quebec and head for home. One view is unanimous and covers all military ranks – the grass is definitely greener on the Canadian side of this dusty deployment.

Capt. Colleen Rose hasn't been home since last September. Her two young sons, aged four and six, have turned her husband into a single parent while she trained in –40 degrees Celcius in Alberta before being deployed to 50C temperatures in Afghanistan.

"You can't imagine what it's like being away that long. Only people who have lived it understand it," she said, while monitoring the start of the Kandahar Amazing Race she planned. "My husband says now that it's only a month before I get home to see the boys, he'll start putting the toilet seats back on."

"You miss your life. You miss being able to wear a tank top, for example," adds Cpl. Kristin Kuschnerait of Petawawa, Ont., who just got engaged last month while on leave.

"I find it hard to keep focused," said Cpl. Shawn Fagan of CF Base Gagetown, N.B. "Everything at home means Canada to me and I am standing here in the dust. But we have a job to do and we can't forget the bad guys we're up against won't let up."

There's a theory going around here that this deployment will start losing its bravado for battle as that departure date looms closer, the belief being that nobody wants to be the rotation's last ramp ceremony now that their return seats are booked. That could translate into Canadian battle groups waiting for the Taliban to come to them instead of aggressively hunting down the enemy. That may or may not be the case, but reports from the field show intensifying activity by the Taliban. "Contacts," which can mean anything from fired bullets to rocket grenade launches, are increasing.

And the possibility the Taliban would be shrewd enough to notice the Canadian holiday and attack on a vacation day when soldiers were distracted on base was cause for some anxiety here yesterday.

After all, the most deadly blow to this six-month deployment took place on Easter weekend this year when six soldiers with Five Platoon of the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment were killed by a mine buried in the road.

Air strike killed 45 civilians, elders say; Afghan president orders investigation

IDNUMBER 200707020096
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; BOMBINGS
DATELINE: GIRISHK, Afghanistan
SOURCE: AFP
WORD COUNT: 265

Village elders said they had recovered the bodies of 45 civilians, mostly women and children, killed in foreign air strikes as Afghan President Hamid Karzai ordered an investigation yesterday.

NATO's force, under fire over the number of civilian casualties, said however it believed less than a dozen villagers and a "significant number" of Taliban were killed in Friday's bombardment in southern Helmand province.

With tensions high, Taliban fighters attacked troops from the International Security Assistance Force in the Girishk district, killing a British soldier and wounding four others, the defence ministry in London said.

Yesterday's attack was followed by a suspected suicide bomb, ISAF said. Witnesses said a military vehicle was set ablaze. Three Afghan passersby were also hurt, the government said.

Helmand province is among the most volatile areas of Afghanistan, with extremist Taliban militants said to be teamed up with foreign "jihadists" and illegal opium traders.

Friday's air strikes by ISAF and the separate U.S.-led coalition were called in after troops trying to clear the Helmand River of Taliban fighters came under heavy attack, military forces have said.

The strikes had targeted positions from which the troops were being fired on, ISAF spokesman Major John Thomas said.

"The civilians who may have died were in the same firing positions with the Taliban extremists who were firing on us," he said.

They included women and children who were found among the bodies of killed Taliban in trenches.

"At this time we believe after our survey of the situation yesterday (Saturday) when the fighting ceased that there may be less than a dozen civilians dead," he said.

But village elders said they had recovered 45 bodies, mostly women and children, Girishk district chief Dur Alisha told AFP.

Such a toll of civilian dead would be the highest since 2002, the year after the Taliban were ousted from

power in an invasion led by the United States.

Extremists win when we attack our own freedoms

IDNUMBER 200707020078
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial / Op-Ed
PAGE: A14
KEYWORDS: TERRORISM
SOURCE: The Gazette
WORD COUNT: 544

How long until the stolen cars full of gasoline, propane and nails arrive in Canada? It's a question we cannot avoid as we read the latest developments from Britain.

That the Friday and Saturday incidents in central London and at Glasgow Airport caused no serious injuries was the result of good luck or inept bombers, or both. But as we see by the daily drumbeat of reports from Iraq – and, increasingly, Afghanistan – suicide killings and "improvised explosive devices" are a growth industry.

And if fanatics can put together car bombs of such deadly potential in London, they can do so in this country as well. Canada – a participant in the Afghan venture and a country full of soft targets – could well be in the line of fire.

The one such plot which authorities in this country foiled, 13 months ago, seems to have been conceived by people with little sophistication in these matters – for which we can all be grateful. But there is no guarantee that the next conspiracy to slaughter will be as bumbling.

How then should we respond to this danger? With careful civil–defence preparation, certainly; with intense police and intelligence work; and with protection of vital infrastructure such as power plants. And we can all – individuals as well as governments – work to help Muslim (and all) immigrants integrate into Canadian life – even if this means hijabs on the soccer field.

But beyond those measures, there is in truth not a lot that can be done against terrorism – except to be sure that we do not undermine our liberties and the limits on government power in our society.

Terrorism, even on the scale of Sept. 11, cannot always be prevented, but it cannot destroy us, either. Nuclear or biochemical weapons are a grave concern, true, but have proved purely theoretical so far. Against bombs outside nightclubs, and the like, what makes sense is simply to get on with life. As horrible as such attacks are for the victims, they are essentially trivial at the level of the whole society. Britons' celebrated sang–froid outlasted the Luftwaffe and the Irish Republican Army and it can outlast this as well.

Those who would prefer to "attack the root causes of terrorism" may not see that this means appeasing fanatic lunatics, which is probably impossible and certainly undesirable. The problems of so many Arabic and Muslim countries are caused not by "crusaders" or club–goers, but by bad governance. And nobody in the West, except perhaps a few fanatic lunatics of our own, wants to "destroy Islam." Blowing us up will not solve their problems. But as long as extremists preach such lies in order to solidify their own power, some who hear the message will succumb to the poison of terror tactics. As events of recent years in Britain and elsewhere have revealed, even those living middle–class lives in the west can be vulnerable to this insanity.

Our tools against the plague of car bombs, if it comes here, will be the same ones which have served the British so well for so long: attentive police work, respect for individual rights, free institutions – and a stiff upper lip.

Troops display love for Canada

IDNUMBER 200707020120
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
COLUMN: In Afghanistan
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / Cpl. Rikk Lewis leaves no doubt where his allegiance lies on Canada Day in Kandahar. ; Photo: Don Martin, CanWest News Service / Cpl. Pauline Hunter, left, and Cpl Kristen Nobles whoop it up at Canada Day in Kandahar, Afghanistan. ;
KEYWORDS: WAR
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
BYLINE: Don Martin
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 578

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That could translate into Canadian battle groups waiting for the Taliban to come to them instead of aggressively hunting down the enemy while they sleep outdoors in the grape fields and mountains to the south and west of here.

That may or may not be the case, but reports from the field show intensifying activity by the Taliban.

"Contacts," which can mean anything from fired bullets to rocket grenade launches, are increasing and troops are still aggressively moving to strike down any insurgent activity.

And the possibility the Taliban would be shrewd enough to notice the Canadian holiday and attack on a vacation day was cause for some anxiety.

After all, the most deadly blow to this six-month deployment took place on Easter weekend this year when six soldiers with Five Platoon of the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment were killed by a mine buried in the road.

That threat injected a subtle dose of extra vigilance and suspense into Canada Day operations which, at this writing, had thankfully not produced any casualties.

Still, lest we forget, Canada Day may be an excuse to party for some, but it's another dangerous day for hundreds of other soldiers sweating on the front lines.

When we blow out the candles on this long birthday weekend, the nation's best wishes must be reserved for the troops who had a helluva good patriotic excuse for missing the party.

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Women, children among air strike victims

IDNUMBER 200707020107
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; BOMBINGS
DATELINE: GIRISHK, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 269

Village elders said Sunday they had recovered the bodies of 45 civilians, mostly women and children, killed in foreign air strikes as Afghan President Hamid Karzai ordered an investigation.

NATO's force, under fire over the number of civilian casualties, said however it believed fewer than a dozen villagers and a "significant number" of Taliban were killed in Friday's bombardment in the southern Helmand province.

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They included women and children who were found among the bodies of killed Taliban in trenches.

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Such a toll of civilian dead would be the highest since 2002, the year after the Taliban were ousted from power in an invasion led by the United States.

Celebrations from sea to sea mark Canada's 140th birthday; 'We are a country . . . truly blessed'

IDNUMBER 200707020106

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2007.07.02

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Mike Carroccetto, CanWest News Service / The Canadian Forces Snowbirds air demonstration team fly past the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill. ; Photo: Scott Robert Collins, CanWest News Service / Chinese Canadians take part in the Canada Day parade in downtown Montreal. ;

KEYWORDS: CANADA DAY; CANDIDATES

DATELINE: OTTAWA

SOURCE: CanWest News Service; with files from The Montreal Gazette and Edmonton Journal

WORD COUNT: 415

As Canada turned 140 Sunday, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean and Prime Minister Stephen Harper celebrated the nation's international role in making peace, fighting climate change, and even playing hockey — saying those efforts are what makes Canada an "amazing" country and world leader. Half a world away, some Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan celebrated under the searing sun while others were checking out the party from armoured vehicles as they rumbled off to hazardous combat operations.

On Parliament Hill, thousands of people crowded the lawns to take in the day-long festivities, which included a 21-gun salute, a fly past by the Snowbirds, and concerts and fireworks to cap the night.

"From hockey championships to humanitarian and military leadership roles in Afghanistan and Haiti, Canada is a citizen of the world and we can make our contribution a positive one," Harper said.

"We are a federation of 10 provinces and three territories more united than ever and our vision extends beyond three shores."

The prime minister said it is a time to celebrate our past and work toward our future.

"From the natural wealth of the land that God created, to the talents, energy and imagination of people drawn from all the nations of the earth, we are a country that has been truly blessed," Harper told the crowd of several thousand.

"I believe that whether our ancestors came from the East, the West, or the South, as Canadians we always look to the North for the true definition of our country."

The Governor General used her Canada Day message to say Canadians have a responsibility to help those who suffer.

"We cannot overstate how lucky we are to be able to think, speak, choose, act, and live in complete freedom; not when barbarism and misery affect so many countries and people around the world," Jean said on Parliament Hill.

"I was born in a country that was under a merciless dictatorship, so like many Canadians who have come here from abroad, I know how precious that freedom really is," she said.

Across Canada, Canada Day celebrations promised to uplift spirits and show off regional culture. Celebrations on Parliament Hill in Ottawa marked the country's largest party.

Irish dancers and fiddlers graced downtown St. John's as Newfoundland was the first province to celebrate the national holiday.

Montrealers waved Canadian flags and cheered as marching bands, pipers, colourful floats, acrobats and folk dancers in ethnic costumes carried the parade as it moved along a major downtown thoroughfare, ending at Place du Canada, where a crowd-pleasing birthday cake was served.

In Edmonton new Canadians raised their right hand to recite an oath pledging allegiance on the legislative grounds.

"For me, it's a great thing and we're very grateful for this opportunity of becoming a Canadian citizen," said Mark Martinez.

"A lot of people in the Philippines tried to do whatever it takes to come here."

Deadly floods ravage Pakistan

IDNUMBER 200707020095
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.07.02
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
COLUMN: Asia Report: News From the Region
KEYWORDS: FLOODS; NATURAL DISASTERS
DATELINE: QUETTA, Pakistan
BYLINE: Gul Yusafzai
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 216

A flash flood swept through six villages in Pakistan's storm-hit Baluchistan province, killing 30 people and forcing more than 10,000 from their homes as a huge effort to help up to 1.5 million people geared up.

Early rainy season storms have brought death and destruction to parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India, killing about 600 people over the past 10 days.

Pakistan has been worst hit.

A storm battered the nation's biggest city, Karachi, on June 23, killing about 230 people.

Three days later, a cyclone hit the southwest coast, flooding huge tracts of mostly flat, usually desert-like, Baluchistan province.

The cyclone and floods have affected between 1.2 million and 1.5 million, deputy provincial relief commissioner Ali Gul Kurd said on Sunday. About 250,000 people are homeless.

Persistent rain has aggravated the flooding and caused flash floods like the one that swept away the villages in Khuzdar district on Saturday.

"We've managed to find 30 bodies so far, but we don't even know how many people are missing," Kurd said.

"Everything is being done haphazardly."

The military is helping organize rescue and relief efforts with six C-130 cargo aircraft and more than two dozen helicopters carrying out search and rescue and relief operations.

Aid is being taken by rail to the town of Sibi and distributed from there while the coastal belt is being supplied by sea.

Camps for the homeless were being set up, but in the meantime people were crowding into schools.

"Most of the displaced have been moved to schools, but there aren't enough," Kurd said.

Flooding has also increased the danger of snakes and at least three people had been bitten in one district.

Authorities were desperate for anti-venom, aid workers said. Health secretary Shafi Zehri said supplies were being distributed.

THE AFGHAN MISSION As more blood spills, the military sees progress Civilian deaths rise and danger zones spread, but officials point to a stronger Afghan army and weakened Taliban

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071830135

DATE: 2007.07.02

PAGE: A10 (MAP)

BYLINE: GRAEME SMITH

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORDS: 1944

WORD COUNT: 2023

GRAEME SMITH KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN The troops in southern Afghanistan seem to have done everything right this year. They infiltrated the Taliban, killed many of their top leaders and held all the major cities and towns. The spring offensive has been thwarted, and the insurgents who last year threatened Kandahar city have scattered into small groups capable only of minor skirmishes.

But a troubling paradox has emerged amid those successes, as this year also brought rising violence, a surge in civilian casualties, and worsening security conditions for aid workers. The new Afghanistan has never seen more blood.

Interviews with a dozen key officials in the country, including Canada's top military commander, the Canadian ambassador and senior United Nations staff, reveal a deeply ambivalent view of the security situation in the first half of the year. They're proud of their accomplishments, but worried about mixed signs of progress.

An ambassador from a major troop-contributing country voiced his bafflement during a recent meeting in Kabul, saying it's hard to understand why ordinary people in Afghanistan feel less safe now, despite the military advances on the ground.

"You have a deepening perception that it's all going tits up," said a participant at the meeting. "But at the same time, in a military sense, there's progress." More are dying in the conflict this year. An estimated 2,500 to 3,000 insurgents, civilians, soldiers, and others were killed in the first six months of 2007, meaning the violence has intensified by as much as 50 per cent over last year. But the rate of intensification has slowed — last year's increase was 300 per cent — which gives some officials reason for optimism.

"If we hadn't gotten their senior leadership, we'd be in a different fight now," said a top military official.

The sharp increase in the number of Taliban commanders killed or captured this year is believed to have slowed the insurgency, but it may also have contributed to the Taliban's dispersal into smaller combat groups. Last year, the Canadian troops faced down an army of hundreds, if not thousands, of insurgents southwest of Kandahar city.

This year, the largest band of fighters encountered by the Canadian battle group amounted to perhaps 40 gunmen.

This has allowed the Canadians to resume work started in the spring of 2006, when soldiers roamed to the farthest corners of the province to assert government control. The insurgents' thrust at Kandahar city forced Canadians to concentrate their entire strength on defending a 20-square-kilometre space last September. Now, the soldiers are patrolling an area that measures 60,000 square kilometres.

The growing battlefield has caused serious disadvantages for the foreign troops, however, as a limited number of soldiers are dispersed across a vast expanse. Taliban spokesmen have described this as their new strategy, saying their smaller guerrilla units can cover more territory and draw the international forces further from the safety of their bases.

So far, the Taliban's new methods haven't been successful. NATO and U.S. forces have suffered about 100 deaths this year, which means they're dying at roughly the same rate as last year. But as the fighting rips through more villages it leaves behind a bloody trail of civilian casualties, which have roughly doubled this year.

Some estimates say the foreign troops and their Afghan allies, not the Taliban, are now to blame for the majority of civilian deaths.

New Taliban tactics A group of doctors was drinking green tea at Mirwais hospital in Kandahar earlier this spring, chatting about the worsening security. Ordinary people in the city have reason to feel more relaxed this year, now that foreign troops have forced the Taliban far enough from the city limits that there's little chance of insurgents spilling through the gates. But anybody linked with the government, even doctors, have felt increasingly anxious about the Taliban's shift to terrorist tactics.

A mobile phone rang as they spoke, and a hospital administrator picked it up. All he could hear was screaming, at first, then the desperate voices became recognizable to the medical staff in the room. It was the sound of their colleagues crying for help. A man came on the line, identified himself as a Taliban fighter, and told the hospital workers that the insurgents had captured five outreach workers bringing medical care to refugees west of the city.

That kidnapping dragged on for weeks, and ended when the Taliban beheaded a doctor and released the others.

The International Committee for the Red Cross says health workers across the country are seeing greater numbers of people injured or displaced so far in 2007 compared with the same period last year, although the agency declined to release statistics.

"I feel quite strongly that there's been an intensification of the conflict, and it's spreading," said Reto Stocker, head of the ICRC delegation in Kabul. "It's definitely getting worse." The ICRC also describes the insecurity climbing northward, out of the volatile south. Kabul newspapers have been full of stories in recent months about the Taliban encroaching on the capital.

No serious battles have been waged near Kabul, however, and an assessment by the United Nations casts doubt on the idea that the insurgency is moving north.

The general trend revealed by the UN maps is worsening security across a broad swath of southern and eastern Afghanistan.

Twelve months ago, 15 per cent of the country was deemed highest-risk for travel by aid workers. Now, it's

up to 25 per cent.

But some aid workers have defied the risk assessments. The National Solidarity Program, one of the most successful initiatives in Afghanistan, has continued to expand its network of local councils that propose and implement small public works. Canada recently spent \$2-million to expand the NSP into the Khakrez and Spin Boldak districts of Kandahar, and officials say the program has reached both areas despite the fact that their status worsened on the UN maps.

Partly, this reflects the uncontroversial nature of the NSP, which gives money to tribal elders for whatever projects they deem necessary.

The Afghan government often meets greater resistance when it tries to implement other parts of its agenda in rural areas, such as poppy eradication and girls' education. Villagers become even more rebellious when they suffer at the hands of government officials who exploit their power for personal wealth or tribal gain.

One senior Western analyst said a few tribes that control the government in southern Afghanistan have exploited NATO's muscle to grab a bigger share of the drug trade, breeding resentment.

It's a theme increasingly echoed by military officials, although they're usually more diplomatic in talking about their allies.

"We need to help this government become less predatory, less corrupt," said Brigadier-General Phil Jones, the UN's top military adviser in Afghanistan. Health and education continue to improve, Brig.-Gen.

Jones said, "but some of the other indicators are going backwards, not forwards." 'Baby steps' Brigadier-General Tim Grant, the top Canadian commander in the country, sat in the back of a troop carrier on a sunny afternoon last week, and watched the heat ripple over the bleak hills of Shah Wali Kot district. Time seemed to pass more slowly in that stark landscape, where nothing moved except a few clouds.

Foreigners should have patience with the new Afghan government, he said. He acknowledged that corruption exists, even nodding his head and declaring "Absolutely!" when it was suggested that local officials reap profits by eradicating their competitors' opium crops.

"At the end of the day, it's baby steps," he said. "This country has been without a reasonable facsimile of a democratic government for 30-odd years, and in an almost constant state of conflict or war. We won't fix this problem overnight." Arif Lalani, the new Canadian ambassador, also seems hopeful.

Sitting in his Kabul office, the ambassador looked at the UN maps showing worsening security and shook his head. Statistics don't tell the whole story, he said; Kandahar city has transformed since he visited in April of 2006.

"I drove through the centre of town and I can see the difference," he said. "Storefronts are open, economic activity, kids playing on the streets." The ambassador continued: "I myself have been amazed. We're now building bridges, canals, rehabilitating schools and providing basic assistance. All of that, I think, is progress, and that's hard to factor into a [UN] access map." A GLASS HALF FULL Brigadier-General Tim Grant, the top Canadian commander in Afghanistan, travelled with a reporter this week to an artillery position north of Kandahar city. Sitting in the back of an armoured vehicle, he discussed reasons for optimism. A bigger Afghan army "The army has made significant progress and we will continue to see progress as we restructure our battle group to allow for more training of Afghan national army kandaks , infantry battalions.

And over the course of the next couple of months, we're going to see the number of kandaks triple in this province, which is phenomenal news. We believe that with our help they will become effective, and they will

be able to, quite frankly, within a year or two, be taking the lead on fighting, with our support." The Pakistan border "We have people talking to one another. Military leaders on both sides of the [Pakistan–Afghanistan] border have the cellphone numbers of each other, and they're talking to each other when tensions rise . . . and that's stuff that wasn't happening a year ago." Fewer insurgents "[It has] gotten worse from the standpoint that the types of attacks the Taliban have used have changed dramatically. They're no longer meeting us on the battlefield, so to speak. So the use of suicide bombers and roadside bombs has increased dramatically since last year.

"The question we wrestle with is, is it good or bad that they've switched from [a] conventional to non-conventional terrorist-type approach? At the end of the day, I think it's a sign that the Taliban movement as a whole is faltering. They don't have the leadership any more to bring large groups together." Graeme Smith

INSURGENT-RELATED ATTACKS BY PROVINCE, 2007* Western region Farah 60 Herat 36 Badghis 10 Ghor 9 Northern region Balkh 23 Faryab 14 Sari Pul 13 Jawzjan 5 Samangan 2 Northeastern region Baghlan 37 Kunduz 18 Takhar 11 Badakshan 6 Southern region Kandahar 253 Zabul 136 Helmand 91 Uruzgan 32 Nimroz 19 Central Highland region Daykundi 6 Barmyan 1 Central region Logar 56 Wardak 47 Kabul 42 Kapisa 18 Parwan 13 Panjsher 0 Eastern region Kunar 233 Nangarhar 121 Laghman 63 Nuristan 35 Southeastern region Khost 205 Ghazni 88 Paktika 82 Paktya 72 *Jan 1 – June 12

INSURGENT-RELATED ATTACKS BY REGION, 2007* Southern region 29.2% Western region 6.1% Northeastern region 3.4% Northern region 3.1% Southeastern region 22.5% Eastern region 24.5% Central Highland region 0.4% Central region 9.7% *Jan 1 – June 12, figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TROOP DEATHS, U.S. AND ITS ALLIES 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 United States 12 48 48 52 99 98 50 Other 20 9 6 31 93 50 Total 12 68 57 58 130 191 100

TOTAL ESTIMATED DEATHS* 2005 2006 2007 1,000 4,000 2,500–3,000 *People killed in Afghanistan's conflict, including insurgents, civilians, soldiers and all others.

MIKE FAILLE/THE GLOBE AND MAIL; ICASUALTIES.ORG, VIGILANT STRATEGIC SERVICES, UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: strife; defence; policy; human rights; statements; statistics; table

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Taliban

THE AFGHAN MISSION: 'ALL THE PEOPLE IN THIS AREA WILL START JIHAD AGAINST THE FOREIGN TROOPS' How Taliban exploit civilian casualties

Armed militants are quick to offer rudimentary care in hopes of winning support

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IDN: 071830134

DATE: 2007.07.02

PAGE: A1 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: GRAEME SMITH

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORDS: 557

WORD COUNT: 502

GRAEME SMITH KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN The scene of Afghanistan's latest civilian bombing was still smoking, the injured still moaning in the dust, when villagers witnessed the Taliban's unnerving ability to exploit the carnage for propaganda.

Armed insurgents arrived almost immediately at the blasted patch of desert near Hyderabad in Helmand province, villagers say – speaking in grateful tones about the gunmen who helped them recover the bodies and ferry the injured to hospitals.

"All the people in this area will start jihad against the foreign troops," said Haji Nazar Mohammed, 50, a small-time farmer who claimed to have lost dozens of relatives. By declaring jihad, or holy war, against the soldiers, the villagers would commit themselves to helping the Taliban.

In the two days since the overnight bombing left an unknown number of people dead on Saturday morning, residents say the Taliban have been busy drumming up support in the affected area, offering rudimentary medical care, and even helping journalists arrange telephone interviews with relatives of the victims.

Dur Ali Shah, the government's district chief, says he cannot offer the victims any help of his own because the area remains too dangerous for him to visit.

Village elders visited him on Saturday and claimed they had recovered the bodies of 45 civilians and 62 Taliban, he said, but he has no way of confirming the information.

Those figures would make the Hyderabad bombing one of the largest in years, although NATO disputes the numbers.

A NATO spokesman said he believes the dead civilians amount to a dozen at the most, adding that the force will co-operate with Afghan investigations into the incident.

President Hamid Karzai ordered a six-man team yesterday to prepare a detailed report on the bombings.

THE AFGHAN MISSION: 'ALL THE PEOPLE IN THIS AREA WILL START JIHAD AGAINST THE FOREIGN TROOPS'

Parallel investigations by the Afghan National Police and local human-rights workers are already under way.

Details remain unclear, even for people who survived the incident.

The fighting started on Friday night when insurgents used a civilian house to launch an attack on government forces, said Mr. Shah, the district chief.

A police official said earlier that Taliban ambushed foreign troops and then fled into the village of Hyderabad, which was then targeted with bombs.

Villagers say they heard the fighting and fled toward a makeshift camp in a barren area.

They had hoped to get away from the trees and vineyards where Taliban might hide, they said, because the didn't want to get caught in the crossfire.

"This is what usually happens during the fighting: The people run to the desert," said Khudai Dad, 50, a wealthy landowner from Hyderabad.

Two tractors were pulling carts loaded with families trying to escape when they were hit with bombs, villagers said. Some accounts said a sedan was also caught in the blasts.

"I saw many women and children with their heads, legs, arms, separated from their bodies," Mr. Dad said. "I saw tractors burned, and women and children were burned in their seats . . . some of them, we couldn't tell if they were men or women." The number of civilian deaths inflicted by NATO and U.S. operations in Afghanistan has risen dramatically, with roughly 300 killed so far this year.

One of the major exceptions to this trend has been in Kandahar province, where Canadian commanders say they haven't heard any complaints of civilian casualties in 2007.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS Sweetheart, you don't look a day over 139 Thousands of Canadians, young and old, attend events across the country to mark nation's 140th birthday

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IDN: 071830110

DATE: 2007.07.02

PAGE: A6 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: ALEXANDER PANETTA AND TERRY PEDWELL

SECTION: National News

SOURCE: CP

EDITION: Early

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 980

WORD COUNT: 815

ALEXANDER PANETTA AND TERRY PEDWELL Canadian Press OTTAWA As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill that Canada is once again a player on the world stage.

He delivered a brief state-of-the-nation address whose cheerful tone was in stark contrast to the sombre, overcast skies that loomed as he took the stage yesterday before 35,000 people.

Canada has resumed its role as a world leader by contributing to the security of Afghanistan and Haiti, and by becoming an energy and resources superpower, he said.

"The news is spreading throughout the world: Canada's back," Mr.

Harper told the crowd.

"Canada's back as a vital player on the global stage. . . . Canadians are citizens of the world and we're making a positive contribution in every field of human endeavour." His upbeat message was heard by thousands who braved the unseasonably cool weather and the threat of rain to take in the birthday celebration in the nation's capital.

Mr. Harper arrived on Parliament Hill with his wife and children as a 21-gun military salute opened a noontime show under a dark sky and temperatures of 14 degrees.

Governor-General Michaëlle Jean arrived by horse-drawn landau and inspected a military honour guard after swearing in 49 new Canadians at a citizenship ceremony at Rideau Hall.

She reminded the crowd of her own immigration from Haiti and her lifelong appreciation for what Canada represents: hope and freedom.

She lauded Canadian soldiers seeking to spread those same values in Afghanistan.

CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS Sweetheart, you don't look a day over 139 Thousands of Canadians, young and old, attend events across the country to mark nation's 140th birthday

At roughly the same moment, a Rwandan refugee was among 99 people preparing to become Canadian citizens in Edmonton. Pauline Mukashema described fleeing her home to the sound of gunshots, as her native country degenerated in a wave of genocidal violence in 1994.

All she took with her were five photographs and some clothing.

After years living in other African countries, she moved with her parents and siblings to Canada in 2003.

"It was a dream to come to Canada," said Ms. Mukashema, now 25.

"The one thing that always [stopped] me is, 'You don't have an identity. You're a refugee, you don't have anything.' . . . Now that I'm a Canadian, I'm able to travel, I'm able to vote, I'm able to really make things happen." "It's home now." In Ottawa, the biggest crowd reaction came when the Canadian Forces' Snowbirds fanned out across the sky above the Peace Tower in perfect synchronicity with the dramatic final notes of O Canada .

While those skies were mostly grey, there was a considerable amount of blue on stage.

The traditional red and white could be seen everywhere. But an Ottawa radio station called for a boycott of the festivities in protest against the Conservative party colours being plastered on the giant "Canada" sign above the main stage.

"Show your support for Canada by avoiding Parliament Hill and its festivities," said an online statement by station Hot 89–9.

"There are hundreds of things to do besides attending this bizarre display of 'patriotism.' If you do attend, you'll be left feeling blue." A competing radio personality did not mince his words in criticizing the proposed boycott.

"How stupid is that?" said Lowell Green, a conservative talk-show host at competing CFRA. "What, are we going to boycott the blue of the skies, too? There's red there, too [on the stage.] There's as much red as there is blue." There was also plenty of blue on the periphery of Parliament Hill – in the police uniforms visible everywhere at an event where the security presence had been visibly stepped up.

At least three RCMP officers stood guard at each entrance point to Parliament Hill, checking purses, bags and backpacks.

There were also police officers and security cameras installed around the nearby War Memorial with its Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Young party-goers ignited a national scandal by urinating on the monument during last year's event.

In Montreal, thousands lined the streets for a parade yesterday that featured a multicultural celebration and even a political statement.

This political statement, however, had nothing to do with the decades-old nationalist tug-of-war between Quebec and Canada.

It had to do with the Atlantic seal hunt.

Draped only in Canadian flags, a man and woman from Concordia University who denounced the hunt were invited to join the parade.

CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS Sweetheart, you don't look a day over 139 Thousands of Canadians, youn

"One of the beauties about being Canadian is you can do whatever you want on that day," said parade-watcher Bob Hutchings.

"They are part of the parade because Canada lets you protest." In Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Danny Williams reflected on the anniversary of the First World War Battle of Beaumont Hamel.

During a wreath-laying ceremony in St. John's, the Premier announced plans to unveil plaques commemorating the hundreds of Newfoundland men killed during the war.

"We must always appreciate that they paid for our freedom with their lives," Mr. Williams said in a statement.

"In a small and symbolic way, we will finally bring these soldiers home." The bronze plaques will be replicas of ones found at a memorial in France. They will be unveiled next July 1.

In Halifax, hundreds gathered under sunny skies at the historic Citadel site to eat birthday cake and watch a foot-and-arms drill by the 78th Highlanders.

Bart Snell of Dartmouth, a retired master seaman in the navy, paused for a moment when asked what Canada Day meant to him.

"I served 25 1/2 years in the military," Mr. Snell said. "It means being able to have Canada Day peacefully . . . no matter what race or nationality you are." For Becca MacAulay, summing up the day's meaning was especially simple.

She turned six yesterday.

She said it felt "good" to share her birthday with the entire country.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Ottawa

SUBJECT TERM: holidays; canada day; political; government; anniversaries; citizenship

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS Sweetheart, you don't look a day over 139 Thousands of Canadians, young and old, attend events across the country to mark nation's 140th birthday

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DATE: 2007.07.02

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BYLINE: ALEXANDER PANETTA AND TERRY PEDWELL

SECTION: National News

SOURCE: CP

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 988

WORD COUNT: 845

ALEXANDER PANETTA AND TERRY PEDWELL Canadian Press OTTAWA As the nation celebrated its 140th birthday at parties across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told revellers on Parliament Hill that Canada is once again a player on the world stage.

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Short on cash but long on patriotic spirit, Montreal's Canada Day Parade celebrated its 30th anniversary as thousands watched a multicultural mosaic that included colourful costumes and floats as hundreds marched along downtown Ste-Catherine Street.

But organizers say it was a miracle they were able to stage the parade this year because the \$40,000 they received from the federal Heritage Department is simply not enough to make ends meet.

Parade organizer Claude Leclerc had threatened to turn the parade into a silent protest complete with black arm bands. That was until a \$36,000 cheque arrived from the government on Thursday, with another \$4,000 to come.

CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS Sweetheart, you don't look a day over 139 Thousands of Canadians, youn

"We had to cut back on a lot of things; it really made things difficult," Mr. Leclerc said as he served birthday cake to nearly 5,000 people at Place du Canada.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Danny Williams reflected on the anniversary of the First World War Battle of Beaumont Hamel.

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ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Ottawa

SUBJECT TERM: holidays; canada day; political; government; anniversaries; citizenship

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

Deserving of Orders

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DATE: 2007.07.02

PAGE: A12

BYLINE: ANDRZEJ DERKOWSKI

SECTION: Letter to the Edit

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Oakville, Ont.

WORDS: 53

WORD COUNT: 67

Andrzej Derkowski Oakville, Ont.

Former prime minister Jean Chretien richly deserves to be appointed to the Order of Canada, if only for keeping the country out of Iraq in the face of George Bush's pressure (Chretien, Manning, Weir Honoured – June 30). If only our current PM could be as independent with respect to Afghanistan.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM:political; awards; order of canada

PERSONAL NAME: Jean Chretien

WAR ON TERROR Britain faces evolving threat

Amateurish attacks puzzle investigators

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071830008

DATE: 2007.07.02

PAGE: A1 (MAP)

BYLINE: DOUG SAUNDERS

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: London ENGLAND

WORDS: 1010

WORD COUNT: 957

DOUG SAUNDERS LONDON In Britain, where terrorist plots have become alarmingly familiar, this weekend's dramatic string of attempted car bombings demonstrated a new and disconcerting element: An enthusiastic, and often incompetent, amateurism.

Saturday's fiery attempt to drive an SUV packed with propane cylinders and gasoline into Glasgow airport, and Thursday night's twin car-bomb attempts in London's entertainment district – attacks now believed to be the work of a single gang – failed to claim any lives, although one of the two Glasgow attackers is in critical condition in hospital after setting himself on fire during the attack.

Investigators say the car bombs, using cylinders of compressed propane or oxygen and large quantities of gasoline and shrapnel-producing nails, are the same as Iraqi bombs such as one that killed 87 people in Baghdad two weeks ago. This time, the execution was inept and amateurish.

But the apparently bumbling nature of the attacks has given little comfort to security officials. Instead, it has roused a deeper fear: That a new, less rigidly organized form of Islamic terrorism is emerging in the West, without tight links to al-Qaeda leadership, populated with inconspicuous citizens whose extreme beliefs may have escaped the notice of police and intelligence agencies.

Little is known about the gang, apparently based in northern England, that carried out the car-bomb attempts, although at least three of its active members are believed to remain at large.

Two of the five people arrested, including one of the drivers of the Jeep Cherokee, are reportedly doctors employed in Britain's public medical system, and one was the wife of a doctor, respectable members of society whose terrorist plans had escaped notice.

It was also clear that most of them had not lived in the cities attacked.

"The people we have in custody came to Scotland a short while ago to seek work," said John Neilson, an assistant chief constable with Glasgow's Strathclyde police force. "Other than that, I can't tell you, but I'm sure the community in Glasgow in particular will be reassured. These are not your young people." Police conceded yesterday that at least some of the gang members have never been subjects of surveillance, despite the fact that tens of thousands of Britons are being watched by MI5, the domestic spy agency that is now entirely devoted to counterterrorism.

Senior officials, including Prime Minister Gordon Brown, described the gang yesterday as being affiliated with al-Qaeda. But the precise nature of the links is unknown, and there are fears that a new wave of terrorists is emerging that has never had physical contact with al-Qaeda leaders.

In most major terrorist plots, there have been at least some cell members who have used family connections to attend al-Qaeda training camps in the mountainous regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

There, they have met senior leaders of the terrorist network, learned bomb-making methods and often fallen under the eyes of intelligence agencies.

But there is a fear that members of this gang could be so-called "clean skins," people who developed an affinity with al-Qaeda through Internet connections or personal beliefs, without making any actual contact.

"It's too early to tell whether al-Qaeda central had a role in this attack," said Sajjan Gohel, an analyst with the London-based Asia-Pacific Foundation. "Because it failed, it's unlikely that al-Qaeda leadership will want to be claiming credit for them . . .

. but since 2004, all attacks apprehended in Britain have had at least indirect links to al-Qaeda leadership." Senior political officials yesterday described the gang as part of a new al-Qaeda thrust, timed to coincide with the change of governments in Britain.

"Make no mistake, this weekend's bomb attacks signal a major escalation in the war being waged on us by Islamic militants," John Stevens, Mr. Brown's security adviser, said yesterday. "The terror of 7/7 [the 2005 bombings] was awful enough, but now al-Qaeda has imported the tactics of Baghdad and Bali to our streets. . . It will get worse before it gets better." Yet intelligence officials said that it is also clear that years of intensive policing and surveillance have changed the nature of terrorist cells.

In earlier years, officials saw al-Qaeda cells as being similar to the Irish Republican Army groups that terrorized Britain with bombing campaigns throughout the 1980s and '90s: They were fairly well-trained and organized, often veterans of military campaigns and able to channel their extreme beliefs into well-orchestrated actions.

The latest generation seem more similar to the left-wing terrorist cells that emerged in the United States in the early 1970s, setting off dozens of bombs, most of which failed to explode or kill anyone.

Because intensive policing prevented larger or more permanent extremist groups from forming, the scene was dominated by the small, the amateur and often the undetectable.

Police said yesterday that the bombing attempts were almost certainly carried out by a gang of eight people, and that the Glasgow and London attacks used almost identical devices.

SWEEPING CRACKDOWN Five people have been arrested in connection with Friday's attempted car bombings in London and Saturday's foiled attack on Glasgow Airport.

The search continues for at least three other people with suspected links to a terrorist cell that may be plotting further attacks.

SATURDAY Police arrested the driver and passenger of an SUV after it smashed into glass doors near the check-in area at Glasgow Airport, then burst into flames.

YESTERDAY A 26-year-old man was arrested in Liverpool.

YESTERDAY Police arrested a 26-year-old man and a 27-year-old woman on the M6 motorway.

EARLY MORNING FRIDAY Police defused an improvised bomb in a car parked outside a popular nightclub near London's Piccadilly Circus.

Shortly afterward, police towed a car parked nearby to an impound lot, where they discovered similar explosives in the vehicle.

YESTERDAY Officers raided a rented house in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

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Singing for our wounded

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CP Wire A Newfoundland folksinger and his band are using music to support Canadian soldiers wounded in Afghanistan.

Eddie Coffey, who gained popularity in the '60s and '70s, wraps up a series of free concerts in Alberta this weekend in Grande Prairie.

Four years ago, he and his band became so touched by the work of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan that they decided to hold a series of fundraising concerts. They have been on the road almost continuously ever since.

Part of the money the band raises will go to Wounded Warriors, a charity that collects personal items, such as clothing, books and music, for Canadian soldiers who are wounded in Afghanistan.

— Canadian Press