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# Commander sees progress

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Canada's soldiers in Afghanistan are making real, measurable improvements in the lives of people in Kandahar province, says the former commander of those troops.

And while the Taliban are likely to continue harassing both soldiers and civilians with "terrorist tactics," Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant believes Afghan security forces have made significant strides toward looking after themselves.

"We went from last year, when there was drought and people were starving, to this year, where it's bumper crops and people are moving back into their homes and really getting on with their lives," said Grant, who returned to Edmonton yesterday after handing off his command.

Grant said the development side of Canada's mission has begun to show results in almost every district of the Kandahar region. Statistics compiled by the military indicate that more than 1,100 wells, 75 kilometres of irrigation canals, 120 kilometres of rural roads and seven kilometres of power lines have been completed. More than 350,000 children have been vaccinated against polio and infant mortality is dropping.

# Villagers harangue Canadian troops

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
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**PAGE:** A4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: CANADIAN PRESS / Canadian soldiers patrol a village in the Shawali Kot area north of Kandahar City, Afghanistan on Sunday. ;  
**DATELINE:** SHAWALI KOT, AFGHANISTAN  
**SOURCE:** Canadian Press  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
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Canadian soldiers found no weapons or Taliban during a recent foray into a region considered an insurgent stronghold, but they did get an earful from villagers who accused them of failing to keep their promises.

"Canadians have come here three times before and promised (to give us a well) but they've done nothing," said Haji Noor Mohammad, a leader in the desolate, poverty-stricken district of Shawali Kot.

The five-day sortie by members of the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment ended yesterday with the soldiers having heard little from the villagers about the Taliban but plenty of griping about the "broken promises" of Canadians and Americans.

Everywhere they went, the Canadians were asked about the digging of new wells and the building of schools and mosques, while the Americans were criticized in one village for not building a school that was allegedly promised five years ago.

Discussing the Taliban was not uppermost on the minds of the villagers.

"Are the Taliban giving you problems?" Canadian Forces Capt. Stephane Girard asked Salim Ahmad, the leader of a village of about 100 people.

Ahmad's response, translated by an interpreter, was unequivocal: "There is no problem with the Taliban here."

He then went on to tell a visibly perplexed Girard that the Taliban have never been seen in the village.

Many of the locals kept their harshest words for the Afghan National Police.

"The police come here after the harvest and extort money from farmers," said Ahmad, echoing comments made in a neighbouring village.

The Afghan National Police is generally acknowledged as a poorly paid force seriously lacking both training and discipline.

The RCMP is one of the international forces involved in providing the Afghan National Police with training under the Provincial Reconstruction Team effort.

Canadian Warrant Officer Hani Massouh said the best the Canadian military can do is to help the Afghan police become more professional and effective.

The Canadians are in touch with high-ranking officials of the Afghan National Police, whose members and command posts are increasingly becoming targets of Taliban insurgents.

Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, Canada's new military commander in Afghanistan, said recently the international community needs to work harder to make sure the Afghan police force is honest and respected.

Canada has about 2,500 troops in Afghanistan.

The Canadians are part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, whose mandate is to help establish the authority of the Afghan government across the arid country.

# No charges laid in friendly fire

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**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**SOURCE:** Canadian Press  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
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Canadian military officials say no charges will be laid in the friendly-fire death of a Canadian soldier last year in Afghanistan.

A report into the March 2006 death of Pte. Robert Costall found that he was killed by gunfire from a U.S. soldier during an attack of "unprecedented intensity" by Taliban forces.

The firefight also injured three other Canadian soldiers, killed a U.S. soldier and injured another.

In July, a U.S. army investigator recommended no charges be filed against the American machine-gunner who killed Costall.

Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier says he's satisfied with the board's findings and that new rules have been incorporated into the military's standard operating procedures to improve the safety of soldiers.

In a statement, Costall's family said he should be remembered for what he lived for, rather than how he died.



# President says U.S. strikes hurt fight against terrorism

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**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
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President Gen. Pervez Musharraf said yesterday that talk of U.S. military strikes against al-Qaida in Pakistan only hurts the fight against terrorism, and his troops bombarded militant hideouts in their strongest response yet to a month of anti-government attacks. Ten suspected militants were killed.

The assault by artillery and helicopter gunships "knocked out" two compounds in Daygan village near the border with Afghanistan.

# PM to demote cabinet vets?; Gov't source says no backbenchers expected to join cabinet, but demotions for existing ministers not ruled out

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper has called his ministers to Ottawa next week for an anticipated cabinet shuffle — one that government sources say will include no new spots for any backbench MPs.

Several government officials said the prime minister wants to meet with his ministers privately the same way he did before his last cabinet shuffle in January.

One government source said the changes will not include any promotions to cabinet from the Conservative back benches, but could result in demotions for some existing ministers.

The stage is also set for a possible relaunch of Parliament in the fall with a new throne speech that would outline his government's next priorities. Senior government bureaucrats have been asked to deliver a status report this summer on the top objectives for their department.

With the minority Parliament now appearing more stable than expected and election speculation dimming, such a move would help prepare the Conservatives for an extended stay in office.

Strengthening his government over the longer term is also one of the reasons Harper appears set to shuffle out under-performing ministers and promote the stronger ones.

Harper's chief of staff Ian Brodie sent out a vaguely worded email asking ministers to be in Ottawa as of Monday.

"It was just, 'Please everybody be available the week of the 13th'," said one government official.

"It didn't say why."

The last time Harper conducted such an exercise was late December, when he held a series of one-on-one meetings with his ministers just days before shuffling his cabinet.

Speculation was rampant at the time that he would remove the environment portfolio from Rona Ambrose — and Harper did little to quell those rumours.

This time the speculation begins with Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, who struggled under persistent opposition attack in the Commons last spring.

PM to demote cabinet vets?; Gov't source says no backbenchers expected to join cabinet, but demotions fo

And with Quebec-based soldiers currently in Afghanistan, his limited command of French could seriously handicap government efforts to defend the mission.

PM to demote cabinet vets?; Gov't source says no backbenchers expected to join cabinet, but demotions fo

# Cdn. troops get earful from Afghan villagers; Patrol in insurgent area hears gripes about broken U.S., Canadian reconstruction promises

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**WORD COUNT:** 315

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Canadian soldiers found no weapons or Taliban during a recent foray into a region considered an insurgent stronghold, but they did get an earful from villagers who accused them of failing to keep their promises.

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Canadian Warrant Officer Hani Massouh said the best the Canadian military can do is to help the Afghan police become more professional and effective.

The Canadians are in touch with high-ranking officials of the ANP, whose members and command posts are increasingly becoming targets of Taliban insurgents.

Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, Canada's new military commander in Afghanistan, said recently the international community needs to work harder to make sure the Afghan police force is honest and respected.

# Cadets support Afghan mission; UNICEF official says \$2,000 donation will go toward education for girls

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**PUBLICATION:** Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** Local news

**PAGE:** 2

**BYLINE:** Brock Harrison

**PHOTO:** Mark Bergin/The Whig-Standard

**ILLUSTRATION:** HMCS Ontario cadets Alyssa Sigouin (left) and James Adams meet Nigel Fisher, president and CEO of UNICEF Canada, following the presentation of a cheque from the cadets to UNICEF for \$2,000.

**WORD COUNT:** 515

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Though Prime Minister Stephen Harper can't seem to find a concise and positive message on Canada's Afghanistan mission, the head of UNICEF Canada says there are six million reasons to stay the course.

That's how many children now attend school in the battle-torn country, says Nigel Fisher. That's a far cry from the 10,000 or so who braved Taliban rulers to attend secret schools a decade ago, when Fisher first began his working relationship with Afghanistan.

"That, to me, is an absolutely remarkable achievement," Fisher said in an interview with the Whig-Standard yesterday, before accepting a \$2,000 cheque from the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets at the Royal Military College. The money will help educate girls in Afghanistan. "Despite the corruption and insecurity, there are solid measures of progress being made. Not only in the two-thirds of the country where the Taliban are not, but even in the Taliban areas. We are still working. We are still supporting."

Fisher, a Canadian who has held several posts with the UN and has spent parts of the last 10 years in Afghanistan, is quick to offer his take on the security situation in that country to policy-makers caught between doing what's right for Afghans and domestic political survival.

Harper's Conservatives have struggled to hit the right note in explaining the mission to Canadians, which some observers say is one of the main reasons the party has stalled in recent opinion polls.

The government has also stated its desire to extend the mission beyond its February 2009 end date and, according to Fisher, the Conservatives have that part of the equation right.

"We should be there militarily," said Fisher, explaining that Canadian and other NATO troops play a key role in containing the Taliban.

The strategy, Fisher says, should be to wear down the Taliban, thin out their ranks through poaching and political recruitment, and reduce them to a "hardcore rump" that can be controlled much more easily, while redevelopment efforts like UNICEF's forge ahead.

That process, he says, is going to take a long time.

"There will not be a military solution by February of 2009. There's no question," he said. "That date doesn't reflect anything realistic in terms of a solution to the problems there."

But its in the small successes that Canadian politicians will find their message, Fisher says.

Ten years ago, when the Taliban first seized power, the education system was nothing more than a smattering of secret schools, about 100, that operated under the Taliban's radar. Today, Fisher says there are 9,200 schools.

Also according to Fisher, immunization rates against common but deadly diseases like polio and measles are up, pre- and post-natal care has improved, indigenous industry and trade has increased and the country's infrastructure is slowly being rebuilt.

"I have the numbers to back that up," he said.

The current military and redevelopment model is working, Fisher says, but he stresses that aid money, foreign workers and political will must not be allowed to tail off if the country is to recover from its quarter-century civil war.

On that note, he praises the Sea Cadets' donation and says it is proof that the small victories coming out of Afghanistan can win support.

"It will take two decades before we can look back and say there's success or not," Fisher said. "[This donation] is great because it shows people believe change is possible."

bharrison@thewhig.com

# Canadian soldiers return from tour in Afghanistan; Canadian soldiers return from tour in Afghanistan

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**SECTION:** Canada

**PAGE:** A8

**SOURCE:** The Canadian Press

**BYLINE:** Bob Weber

**ILLUSTRATION:** Cpl. Benoit Sorel hugs his girlfriend Ashley Wiebe as he arrives at the Edmonton International Airport on Tuesday. Soldiers from the Lord Strathcona's Horse regiment were returning from Afghanistan. (IAN JACKSON / CP)

**WORD COUNT:** 444

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EDMONTON – Canada's soldiers in Afghanistan are making real, measurable improvements in the lives of people in Kandahar province, says the former commander of those troops.

And while the Taliban are likely to continue harassing both soldiers and civilians with "terrorist tactics," Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant believes Afghan security forces have made significant strides toward looking after themselves.

"We went from last year, when there was drought and people were starving, to this year, where it's bumper crops and people are moving back into their homes and really getting on with their lives," said Grant, who returned to Edmonton on Tuesday after handing off his command.

"Across the board, I think it's a success story."

Grant said the development side of Canada's mission has begun to show results in virtually every district of the Kandahar region. Statistics compiled by the military indicate that more than 1,100 wells, 75 kilometres of irrigation canals, 120 kilometres of rural roads and seven kilometres of power lines have been completed.

More than 350,000 children have been vaccinated against polio and infant mortality is dropping.

"(The programs) are working," Grant said. "There's huge traction."

Relative stability brought on by last summer's heavy fighting – along with the end to Kandahar's crippling five-year drought – has made all the difference to the region's agricultural economy, Grant said.

"Kandahar used to supply produce for most of that part of the world and they're starting to get back on their feet now and it's really great to see."

Afghan security forces have also come a long way.

When Grant arrived in the country nine months ago, the Afghan National Army had only a few hundred trained and equipped soldiers. They were only capable of working in groups of between 10 and 15 men. The army now has three trained battalions and plans and executes its own large-scale operations against the Taliban.



Grant acknowledged the police – corrupt, poorly trained and ill-equipped – remain a challenge. Even there, however, he sees small signs of progress, such as the recent appointment of a new chief of police in Kandahar.

"The day I left, he announced that he had arrested four police officers that had been taking bribes. It's small steps but it's all heading in the right direction. The most important things we're working on right now is the development of the police."

Grant said the recently arrived Quebec-based Van Doos are likely to face the same threat that caused all of Canada's most recent casualties – improvised explosive devices, or roadside bombs.

"The Taliban have truly resorted to terrorist tactics, whether it's suicide bombers or roadside bombs. Lots of kids are killed by the Taliban. We see them in the hospitals on a regular basis.

"They are a group that cannot be tolerated. You cannot negotiate with this organization."

'We went from last year, when there was drought and people were starving, to this year, where it's bumper crops and people are moving back into their homes and really getting on with their lives.'

**PUBLICATION:** The Chronicle–Herald

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**ILLUSTRATION:** Cpl. Benoit Sorel hugs his girlfriend Ashley Wiebe as he arrives at the Edmonton International Airport on Tuesday. Soldiers from the Lord Strathcona's Horse regiment were returning from Afghanistan. (IAN JACKSON / CP)

# Shuffle makes no room for backbenchers; MPs not performing up to snuff could be demoted, source says

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**SECTION:** Canada  
**PAGE:** A6  
**BYLINE:** Alexander Panetta  
**WORD COUNT:** 397

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YELLOWKNIFE, NWT – Prime Minister Stephen Harper has called his ministers to Ottawa next week for an anticipated cabinet shuffle – one that government sources say will include no new spots for any backbench MPs.

Several government officials said the prime minister wants to meet with his ministers privately the same way he did before his last cabinet shuffle in January.

One government source said the changes will not include any promotions to cabinet from the Conservative back benches, but could result in demotions for some existing ministers.

The stage is also set for a possible relaunch of Parliament in the fall with a new throne speech that would outline his government's next priorities. Senior government bureaucrats have been asked to deliver a status report this summer on the top objectives for their department.

With the minority Parliament now appearing more stable than expected and election speculation dimming, such a move would help prepare the Conservatives for an extended stay in office.

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"It didn't say why."

The last time Harper conducted such an exercise was late December, when he held a series of one-on-one meetings with his ministers just days before shuffling his cabinet.

Speculation was rampant at the time that he would remove the environment portfolio from Rona Ambrose – and Harper did little to quell those rumours.

This time the speculation begins with Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, who struggled under persistent opposition attack in the Commons last spring.

Shuffle makes no room for backbenchers; MPs not performing up to snuff could be demoted, source says

And with Quebec-based soldiers currently in Afghanistan, his limited command of French could seriously handicap government efforts to defend the mission in that province.

Revenue Minister Carol Skelton could also be on the move after announcing her impending retirement from politics.

The stage also appears set for the possible interruption and relaunching of Parliament – commonly called prorogation – with a new throne speech outlining the government's priorities this fall.

Senior departmental bureaucrats have been asked to produce a report this summer on what progress they've made on implementing government priorities and to outline their major upcoming plans.

"They've been digging around most of the summer asking people for ideas," said one government source.

Officials in Harper's office said he has made no decision yet about whether to prorogue and restart Parliament this fall, and described the bureaucratic exercise as routine government housekeeping.

But sources in two ministerial offices said the request appears aimed at producing material for a throne speech – which is required any time Parliament reopens after prorogation.

# Time for PM to mend fences

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STEPHEN HARPER "improved it worse" in terms of federal–provincial relations on Friday with his leap–frog visits to two Atlantic provinces.

After a caucus retreat in Charlottetown, Mr. Harper dropped in on the neighbours. He consoled flood–stricken Newfoundlanders, but snubbed Premier Danny Williams by not giving advance notice he was coming. The prime minister ended his whirlwind tour at a barbecue hosted by Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay, but mostly kept his distance from Rodney MacDonald.

By the time the PM had left the region, Premier Williams was angrier, and Premier MacDonald got to share a hamburger and some chit–chat – but no substantive talk about the offshore accord – in a barn. While stalemated on the accord, the Bluenose premier is rightly keeping the dialogue open on other issues. Mr. Harper is, ironically, at peace with the region's two Liberal premiers, newly–minted Robert Ghiz of Prince Edward Island and Shawn Graham of New Brunswick. You'd think the Conservative leader would want to begin to mend fences with his Tory cousins.

The only repair Mr. Harper intends is to his cabinet. He candidly told reporters in Charlottetown to expect a cabinet shuffle sooner rather than later, leading to speculation the changes would come next week. The best guessing has beleaguered Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor walking the plank, to be replaced by someone better able to explain and defend the Afghanistan mission. Revenue Minister Carol Skelton's decision not to reoffer frees up a cabinet seat, which Mr. Harper should use to bring in new blood.

One minister the PM should leave alone is Mr. MacKay. While he first seemed in over his head at Foreign Affairs, the former Crown attorney has gradually learned the ropes and has been hands–on at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Mr. MacKay has failed miserably in trying to persuade his boss, the prime minister, to honour the Atlantic accord, to the point he's made himself vulnerable, like other Atlantic Tory MPs, to voter outrage come the election. But any change in ministerial duties for the Central Nova MP would be a demotion, and hand Green Party Leader Elizabeth May more fodder in her crusade to unseat the minister.

Stephen Harper's latest ill–will tour in Atlantic Canada has made matters even worse for him and his party, especially among his former partisan friends who've become his loudest critics. It's time Mr. Harper began acting like a prime minister instead of a bully and more like a statesman than a street fighter.

# Harper might address Aussies on 9–11

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**SECTION:** Canada  
**PAGE:** A4  
**SOURCE:** The Canadian Press  
**BYLINE:** Alexander Panetta  
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YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T. – Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been asked to speak to an international audience about the war on terrorism on the emotionally charged anniversary of the 9–11 attacks.

The prime minister is considering an offer from his Australian counterpart John Howard to speak to his country's parliament on Sept. 11, Canadian officials confirmed.

The prime minister was originally scheduled to deliver an address on Sept. 12 but has been asked by his Australia hosts to make the speech a day earlier than expected.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had been expected to make the speech on the solemn anniversary but a political crisis at home forced him to cancel those plans.

Canadian officials said Tuesday they were looking to rearrange the prime minister's plans to fulfill the request. The prime minister will already be in Australia that week for the Asia–Pacific summit. "It's obviously an honour to go to an allied country to address their parliament," a senior government official said. We are ensuring that Canada's voice is heard on the world stage and we view this as an important opportunity to speak."

The official said Canada and Australia share a number of common ties, including their military and economic commitment to Afghanistan.

The ties include a personal and professional bond between prime ministers Harper and Howard.

In addition to being among Harper's closest allies among foreign leaders and in the struggle against terrorism, Howard has also served as a model on domestic political tactics.

Asia–Pacific leaders are holding their annual summit in Sydney, Australia, next month.

# Canadian troops get earful from Afghanis

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** World

**PAGE:** B8

**SOURCE:** CP

**DATELINE:** SHAWALI KOT, Afghanistan

**WORD COUNT:** 213

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Canadian soldiers found no weapons or Taliban during a recent foray into a region considered an insurgent stronghold, but they did get an earful from villagers who accused them of failing to keep their promises.

"Canadians have come here three times before and promised (to give us a well) but they've done nothing," said Haji Noor Mohammad, a leader in the desolate, poverty-stricken district of Shawali Kot.

The five-day sortie by members of the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment ended Tuesday with the soldiers having heard little from the villagers about the Taliban but plenty of griping about the "broken promises" of Canadians and Americans.

Everywhere they went, the Canadians were asked about the digging of new wells and the building of schools and mosques, while the Americans were criticized in one village for not building a school that was allegedly promised five years ago.

Discussing the Taliban was not uppermost on the minds of the villagers.

"Are the Taliban giving you problems?" Canadian Forces Capt. Stephane Girard asked Salim Ahmad, the leader of a village of about 100 people.

Ahmad's response, translated by an interpreter, was unequivocal: "There is no problem with the Taliban here."

He then went on to tell a visibly perplexed Girard that the Taliban have never been seen in the village.

Many of the locals kept their harshest words for the Afghan National Police.

"The police come here after the harvest and extort money from farmers," said Ahmad, echoing comments made in a neighbouring village.

# N.L. woman who booked vacations popular in Kandahar; Wendy Jones booked flights for soldiers to come home or travel away from war zone

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** Atlantic

**PAGE:** B5

**SOURCE:** CP

**DATELINE:** ST. JOHN'S, N.L.

**WORD COUNT:** 390

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Wendy Jones is not a member of the military, but often felt like she was the most popular person in Kandahar.

That's because as part of her job with the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA), the 27-year-old from St. John's, N.L., was in charge of booking flights for soldiers stationed in southern Afghanistan to return home or vacation in other parts of the world. For the troops, getting time away from the war zone was something they looked forward to the most.

"We were the most-liked people on the base," Jones said laughing. "We'd get the guys out of there, so they would love to see us."

The CFPSA is a civilian organization which supports the soldiers, providing them with various programs and services. Employees do everything from operating the Tim Hortons coffee shop and retail stores to running the travel office and hosting concert performers. Jones worked in the CFPSA's travel office as a travel co-ordinator, arranging the soldiers' three-week vacation time. Soldiers chose to either return to Canada or travel elsewhere in the world for a getaway.

"They all had to go through our office," said Jones, who studied travel and tourism in St. John's, "so we got to meet every person." Jones also helped host musical acts for the soldiers, including Newfoundland's own Karla Pilgrim and The Fables, along with other Canadian acts, such as J.P. Cormier.

"We're in charge of arranging their accommodations and showing them around and getting them settled in," said Jones, who worked for Provincial Airlines and Quality Hotels.

"It's all about promoting welfare and boosting morale for our Canadian soldiers."

Jones particularly liked getting involved with the concerts, which, she said, was a big hit with not only soldiers from Canada, but the United States, Britain, Australia and Romania.

Jones, who served six months in Kandahar, from December to July, applied for the job on the federal government's website last year.

"I was looking for an adventure. It was something out of the ordinary," said Jones, who also got to travel to Italy and Greece.

"I knew I would have a great time."



But there were also difficult times, like when the base came under attack.

"There were a lot of rocket attacks. During the spring, we had one every three nights or so," said Jones, adding that employees worked late at night to be in synchronization with Canada's time zones.

"One hit about 100 metres from our office, knocking the clock off the wall. All I heard was this boom. I said, 'Oh my God.' The alarm went off and we all ran to the bunker."

# Harper invited to give speech in Australia on infamous day; PM to weigh speaking on Sept. 11

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** Canada

**PAGE:** A8

**SOURCE:** CP

**DATELINE:** YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T.

**WORD COUNT:** 259

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been asked to speak to an international audience about the war on terrorism on the emotionally charged anniversary of the 9–11 attacks.

The prime minister is considering an offer from his Australian counterpart John Howard to speak to his country's parliament on Sept. 11, Canadian officials confirmed.

The prime minister was originally scheduled to deliver an address on Sept. 12 but has been asked by his Australia hosts to make the speech a day earlier than expected.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had been expected to make the speech on the solemn anniversary but a political crisis at home forced him to cancel those plans.

Canadian officials said Tuesday they were looking to rearrange the prime minister's plans to fulfill the request. The prime minister will already be in Australia that week for the Asia–Pacific summit. "It's obviously an honour to go to an allied country to address their parliament," a senior government official said.

"We are ensuring that Canada's voice is heard on the world stage and we view this as an important opportunity to speak."

The official said Canada and Australia share a number of common ties, including their military and economic commitment to Afghanistan.

The ties include a personal and professional bond between prime ministers Harper and Howard.

In addition to being among Harper's closest allies among foreign leaders and in the struggle against terrorism, Howard has also served as a model on domestic political tactics.

Harper based his announcement–a–day election strategy in the last campaign on the method used successfully by Howard. In his last federal budget, Harper delivered a variety of fiscal goodies to the same suburban, middle–class families that the Aussie PM calls his "battlers."

# Most golf courses don't include tanks among the hazards

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** Opinion

**PAGE:** A7

**COLUMN:** Political analysis

**BYLINE:** Don Martin

**DATELINE:** KABUL, Afghanistan

**WORD COUNT:** 712

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The blast of a far-off bomb hit in the middle of my backswing. That might be grounds to run for cover or at least claim a mulligan on Canadian golf courses, but this being Kabul and having my iron shot go further than its pathetically short normal, I opted to play on.

Billed as "the best and only golf course in Afghanistan," the Kabul Golf Course has been declared free of landmines and boasts of freshly-oiled greens made from pressed sand.

But if you're like me, stranded here by exit visa problems and bureaucratic foot-dragging for a sixth day, even golf played on rock-hard dirt fairways with thistle-like weeds for ground cover is a slice of pretend—you're-home heaven.

It is a surreal experience, almost worth the outrageous \$25 US greens fee, if only to say you've played one the world's truly horrible courses.

Yet this strange oft-bombed course is arguably a 5,614-yard analogy of Afghanistan, accurately reflecting the country's political stability or, more often than not, instability.

It opened in the early 1970s when Afghanistan was last in a semi-calm state, but closed six years later as the Communists came to power backed by the Soviet military. It reopened after the Soviets retreated, only to be forcibly closed down four years later when the Taliban formed a government.

The original pro shop was bombed by the Taliban and never repaired. Open ditches still bisect the course as a reminder of the Taliban's destruction of the underground irrigation system.

The local golf pro, Muhammad Abdul, was thrown in jail by the Taliban for a couple months in the late 1990s, his trophies seized and destroyed on the grounds that golf was the past-time of idle infidels and helping foreigners improve their game was sinfully anti-Islamic.

After the Taliban were vanquished from power in 2001 to become the insurgency being fought by Canadian soldiers today, the course reopened under Afghanistan government ownership.

The first item of business was to remove three bombed Soviet tanks and the remnants of a troop carrier cluttering the fairway, which would be considered a lateral hazard if struck by a wayward ball.

Then the fairways were subjected to a U.S.-financed mine-removal training project to clear away nasty surprises that could turn the search for a misplayed ball into a life-ending misstep.

Today, the rusty main gate hangs off its hinges and a police station strafed with bullet holes guards the entrance.

After driving a road that runs down the middle of the first fairway to the parking lot, you wake up a clubhouse manager napping under a tree, who groggily refuses to dicker on the high price to play a round of what the scorecard claims is "golf with attitude."

A contest among half a dozen teenagers to serve as caddy ensues, the winner being Ahmad, a high school graduate who plans to attend university to become a teacher. He shot an even-par on the course earlier this year and boasts a five handicap, which means he's a scratch golfer and PGA contender on any other golf course in the world.

He's a dream caddy too, dutifully teeing up every shot by pounding a bent plastic tee into the ground using his fist. He sings your praises after even the most badly hooked drive. He pretends not to understand that gimmies count on the scorecard. And just before the moment to pay him arrived, he declared that I was the best foreign golfer to ever grace the course. The suggested \$5 caddy fee immediately became \$10.

But there are unique complications to playing the game, Kabul style. Like the ant colonies surfacing on the "green." Or having your approach to the sixth hole require a shot over the roof of the police station, which I managed to hit with a mud-loosening well-struck eight iron. Or, after bringing along your translator for his first-ever golfing experience, he thinks part of his job is to carve a shallow trench into the sand to guide your ball into the hole.

In the end, as I signed off a mostly bogus 42 score after nine holes, one thought kept running through my mind: I'll never play this course again. Nah. Just kidding. I was thinking that only in Afghanistan could just having a golf course to play, even if the only one in the country resembles a goat track under construction, be the scorecard to a nation's political health. Perhaps it's a hopeful sign that stability will become par for the course.

Don Martin writes for the Calgary Herald.

# Welcome home, daddy

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** The Province

**PAGE:** A5

**ILLUSTRATION:** Sgt. Jeff Daley hugs his daughter Kaelin, 4, at the Edmonton International Airport Tuesday. Soldiers from the Lord Strathcona's Horse regiment were returning from Afghanistan. Canadian Press photo

# Canada improving lives in Kandahar: commander

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** The Province

**PAGE:** A5

**SOURCE:** CP

**DATELINE:** EDMONTON

**WORD COUNT:** 108

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Canada's soldiers in Afghanistan are making real, measurable improvements in the lives of people in Kandahar province, says the former commander of those troops.

And while the Taliban are likely to continue harassing both soldiers and civilians with "terrorist tactics," Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant believes Afghan security forces have made significant strides toward looking after themselves.

"We went from last year, when there was drought and people were starving, to this year, where it's bumper crops and people are moving back into their homes and really getting on with their lives," said Grant, who returned to Edmonton on Tuesday after handing off his command.

"Across the board, I think it's a success story."

# Canadian troops get earful from Afghan villagers

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**PUBLICATION:** The Telegram (St. John's)

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**SECTION:** National/World

**PAGE:** A5

**SOURCE:** The Canadian Press

**BYLINE:** Martin Ouellet

**DATELINE:** Shawalikot, Afghanistan

**ILLUSTRATION:** Capt. Stéphane Girard gives orders in the Shawali Kot areanorth of Kandahar City, Afghanistan, Sunday. Local villagers have complained to Canadian troops about the way they've been treated by their own police, adding Taliban insurgents are not in their area.  
– Photo by The Canadian Press

**WORD COUNT:** 317

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Canadian soldiers found no weapons or Taliban during a recent foray into a region considered an insurgent stronghold, but they did get an earful from villagers who accused them of failing to keep their promises.

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Ahmad's response, translated by an interpreter, was unequivocal: "There is no problem with the Taliban here."

He then went on to tell a visibly perplexed Girard that the Taliban have never been seen in the village.

Many of the locals kept their harshest words for the Afghan National Police.

"The police come here after the harvest and extort money from farmers," said Ahmad, echoing comments made in a neighbouring village.

The Afghan National Police is generally acknowledged as a poorly paid force seriously lacking both training and discipline. The RCMP is one of the international forces involved in providing the ANP with training under the Provincial Reconstruction Team effort.

Canadian Warrant Officer Hani Massouh said the best the Canadian military can do is to help the Afghan police become more professional and effective.

The Canadians are in touch with high-ranking officials of the ANP, whose members and command posts are increasingly becoming targets of Taliban insurgents.

Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, Canada's new military commander in Afghanistan, said recently the international community needs to work harder to make sure the Afghan police force is honest and respected.



# BC-Cda-News-Digest

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** ADVISORIES  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 825

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OTTAWA (CP) \_ A U.S. military machine gunner, who mistakenly opened fire on Canadians soldiers in the midst of desperate, pitched battle with the Taliban last year, had not been warned that friendly troops were anywhere in the vicinity, a Canadian investigation concluded Tuesday.

The board of inquiry that looked into the March 29, 2006 attack that claimed the life of Pte. Robert Costall blamed the ``fog of war" and more specifically a lack of co-ordination between Canadian, U.S. and Afghan forces, all of which were occupying a dusty, hilltop base that was in danger of being overrun.

Canadian military justice officials said that they are not contemplating any charges in relation to the incident in Sangin, located in Helmand province about 300 kilometres from Kandahar.

The military's technical investigation found the U.S. special forces commander in charge of remote Sangin outpost did not draw up a defensive plan that showed where all friendly forces were located.

Canadian soldiers making real improvements in Afghanistan: returning commander

EDMONTON (CP) \_ Canada's soldiers in Afghanistan are making real, measurable improvements in the lives of people in Kandahar province, says the former commander of those troops.

And while the Taliban are likely to continue harassing both soldiers and civilians with ``terrorist tactics," Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant believes Afghan security forces have made significant strides toward looking after themselves.

``We went from last year, when there was drought and people were starving, to this year, where it's bumper crops and people are moving back into their homes and really getting on with their lives," said Grant, who returned to Edmonton on Tuesday after handing off his command.

``Across the board, I think it's a success story."

Grant said the development side of Canada's mission has begun to show results in virtually every district of the Kandahar region. Statistics compiled by the military indicate that more than 1,100 wells, 75 kilometres of irrigation canals, 120 kilometres of rural roads and seven kilometres of power lines have been completed.

RCMP investigate after lobsters poisoned with toxin in N.S. pound

METEGHAN, N.S. (CP) \_ The killing of 18,000 kilograms of lobster in what police are investigating as a deliberate poisoning left fisherman Paulin Robichaud so shocked he could barely breathe.

The lobster pound owner said Tuesday he staggered out of his small business after finding the dead lobsters in a holding tank on July 27.

Outside, the 49-year-old said he saw a liquid had been spilled on the ground and several holes had been drilled in the building. It was a poison that Environment Canada and the RCMP have yet to identify.

“Really, I was in shock. Total shock,” he said in an interview.

The losses are huge, roughly the equivalent of a tractor-trailer packed from one end to the other with the shellfish, with a value of about \$280,000.

Robichaud said he drove home and told his wife what had occurred.

“I caught her as she was falling down to the floor. She took a shock, too,” he said.

“I didn't think I had an enemy in the world. But I think I'm starting to think differently about that.”

The peaceful Acadian fishing town in southwestern Nova Scotia hasn't seen such an event before, said RCMP Sgt. Michel LaCroix, the Meteghan detachment commander.

LaCroix said autopsies will be done on some of the dead lobsters to determine when they died and confirm that the poison caused their deaths, which could take weeks.

Asked what possible motives exist, LaCroix responded: “It's a multimillion-dollar business. There's a lot of competition. There's a lot of jealous people. There's big money involved in that.”

Share wealth with Ontario manufacturers, unemployed, McGuinty urges Ottawa

OAKVILLE, Ont. (CP) \_ Ontario's manufacturing sector churns out billions for Canada's economy while its taxpayers generate almost half the country's wealth, yet Ottawa is short-changing both the province and its unemployed workers, Premier Dalton McGuinty said Tuesday.

With broader issues like the environment expected to dominate talks at the upcoming meeting of premiers and territorial leaders in Moncton, N.B., McGuinty used a speech to the Oakville Chamber of Commerce to speak about what he'd like from Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Topping the premier's wish list is a commitment to inject more than \$1 billion into the province's struggling manufacturing sector and an overhaul of the federal Employment Insurance system.

“The federal government hasn't intervened as gas prices, interest rates and the Canadian dollar have risen out of control, and that's put a major strain on Ontario's manufacturers,” McGuinty said.

“A 75 cent dollar or even an 85 cent dollar is one thing, but a 95 cent dollar and a 95 cent petro dollar is quite another.”

McGuinty said the federal government should invest in Ontario's economy by matching the more than \$1.1 billion the province has earmarked to help the manufacturing sector become a world leader in innovation.

Quebec police hoping motorists may have clues to child's disappearance

TROIS-RIVIERES, Que. (CP) \_ Police are hoping that motorists who passed through the residential area where a nine-year-old girl disappeared a week ago may hold some clues to her whereabouts.

Quebec provincial police officers planned to use checkpoints between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. Tuesday night to question people who may have some information that will help lead them to Cedrika Provencher.

They're hoping somebody may remember seeing something that may help in their investigation.

“These people haven't yet been sought out and maybe they saw something,” said provincial police spokeswoman Isabelle Gendron.

Gendron said drivers may have been on their way to an activity or to a friend's and seen or heard something they don't realize is significant.

Police are still not ready to say the nine-year-old was abducted and are saying it's a missing person case.

Almost 60 detectives have been chasing leads since Quebec provincial police took over the case late last week.

# 5 suspected Taliban, 2 police officers killed in southern Afghanistan clashes

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 210

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KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP) \_ Taliban militants clashed with police in two separate incidents in southern Afghanistan, leaving five militants and two officers dead, officials said Tuesday.

The militants attacked police at a checkpoint in Shinkay district in Zabul province on Monday, and the ensuing clash left five suspected militants dead, said Ali Kheil, the spokesman for Zabul's governor. There were no police casualties, he said.

Authorities recovered the militants' bodies alongside three motorbikes used in the attack, Kheil said.

Also Monday, militants attacked a police vehicle just outside Kandahar city, killing two officers and wounding eight others, said provincial police chief Syed Agha Saqib. The attackers escaped and police are hunting for them, he said.

Insurgent attacks and military operations have killed more than 3,600 people so far this year, most of them militants. Much of the violence has been concentrated in the former Taliban stronghold in the south.

Also in southern Afghanistan, Dutch soldiers fatally shot a motorcyclist who approached their convoy and failed to heed warning signals and shots, the Dutch Defence Ministry said.

International forces are often the targets of suicide bombers, and they repeatedly warn Afghan civilian motorists to slow down or steer clear of convoys so they are not mistaken for attackers. Several civilians have been killed in such incidents.

# Harper has no plan to add new ministers in imminent cabinet shuffle: sources

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07

**KEYWORDS:** POLITICS

**PUBLICATION:** cpw

**WORD COUNT:** 520

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YELLOWKNIFE, NWT (CP) \_ Prime Minister Stephen Harper has called his ministers to Ottawa next week for an anticipated cabinet shuffle \_ one that government sources say will include no new spots for any backbench MPs.

Several government officials said the prime minister wants to meet with his ministers privately the same way he did before his last cabinet shuffle in January.

One government source said the changes will not include any promotions to cabinet from the Conservative back benches, but could result in demotions for some existing ministers.

The stage is also set for a possible relaunch of Parliament in the fall with a new throne speech that would outline his government's next priorities. Senior government bureaucrats have been asked to deliver a status report this summer on the top objectives for their department.

With the minority Parliament now appearing more stable than expected and election speculation dimming, such a move would help prepare the Conservatives for an extended stay in office.

Strengthening his government over the longer term is also one of the reasons Harper appears set to shuffle out under-performing ministers and promote the stronger ones.

Harper's chief of staff Ian Brodie sent out a vaguely worded email asking ministers to be in Ottawa as of Monday.

"It was just, 'Please everybody be available the week of the 13th'," said one government official.

"It didn't say why."

The last time Harper conducted such an exercise was late December, when he held a series of one-on-one meetings with his ministers just days before shuffling his cabinet.

Speculation was rampant at the time that he would remove the environment portfolio from Rona Ambrose \_ and Harper did little to quell those rumours.

This time the speculation begins with Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, who struggled under persistent opposition attack in the Commons last spring.

And with Quebec-based soldiers currently in Afghanistan, his limited command of French could seriously handicap government efforts to defend the mission in that province.

Revenue Minister Carol Skelton could also be on the move after announcing her impending retirement from politics.

The stage also appears set for the possible interruption and relaunching of Parliament \_ commonly called prorogation \_ with a new throne speech outlining the government's priorities this fall.

Senior departmental bureaucrats have been asked to produce a report this summer on what progress they've made on implementing government priorities and to outline their major upcoming plans.

"They've been digging around most of the summer asking people for ideas," said one government source.

Officials in Harper's office said he has made no decision yet about whether to prorogue and restart Parliament this fall, and described the bureaucratic exercise as routine government housekeeping.

"That's a standard take-stock procedure and we would be doing that regardless," said a senior official.

"The prime minister is still weighing his options for the fall."

But sources in two ministerial offices said the request appears aimed at producing material for a throne speech \_ which is required any time Parliament reopens after prorogation.

Any decision on a throne speech would not be taken lightly by Harper. Such a vote would be a confidence matter upon which the government could survive or fall.

The Tories have been considering prorogation since the spring, when they appeared to lose control of the parliamentary agenda after fulfilling their most high-profile campaign promises \_ such as a one per cent cut in the GST and a new ethics package.

With those items out of the way the opposition feasted almost daily on government mixups over Afghan detainees, on its broken promise not to tax income trusts, and on its equalization dispute with several provinces.

# Canadian soldiers making real improvements in Afghanistan: returning commander

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 419

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EDMONTON (CP) \_ Canada's soldiers in Afghanistan are making real, measurable improvements in the lives of people in Kandahar province, says the former commander of those troops.

And while the Taliban are likely to continue harassing both soldiers and civilians with ``terrorist tactics," Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant believes Afghan security forces have made significant strides toward looking after themselves.

``We went from last year, when there was drought and people were starving, to this year, where it's bumper crops and people are moving back into their homes and really getting on with their lives," said Grant, who returned to Edmonton on Tuesday after handing off his command.

``Across the board, I think it's a success story."

Grant said the development side of Canada's mission has begun to show results in virtually every district of the Kandahar region. Statistics compiled by the military indicate that more than 1,100 wells, 75 kilometres of irrigation canals, 120 kilometres of rural roads and seven kilometres of power lines have been completed.

More than 350,000 children have been vaccinated against polio and infant mortality is dropping.

``(The programs) are working," Grant said. ``There's huge traction."

Relative stability brought on by last summer's heavy fighting \_ along with the end to Kandahar's crippling five-year drought \_ has made all the difference to the region's agricultural economy, Grant said.

``Kandahar used to supply produce for most of that part of the world and they're starting to get back on their feet now and it's really great to see."

Afghan security forces have also come a long way.

When Grant arrived in the country nine months ago, the Afghan National Army had only a few hundred trained and equipped soldiers. They were only capable of working in groups of between 10 and 15 men. The army now has three trained battalions and plans and executes its own large-scale operations against the Taliban.

Grant acknowledged the police \_ corrupt, poorly trained and ill-equipped \_ remain a challenge. Even there, however, he sees small signs of progress, such as the recent appointment of a new chief of police in Kandahar.

``The day I left, he announced that he had arrested four police officers that had been taking bribes. It's small steps but it's all heading in the right direction. The most important things we're working on right now is the development of the police."

Grant said the recently arrived Quebec-based Van Doos are likely to face the same threat that caused all of Canada's most recent casualties \_ improvised explosive devices, or roadside bombs.

“The Taliban have truly resorted to terrorist tactics, whether it's suicide bombers or roadside bombs. Lots of kids are killed by the Taliban. We see them in the hospitals on a regular basis.

“They are a group that cannot be tolerated. You cannot negotiate with this organization.”



## 2nd Writethru CP News Budget – Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2007

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** ADVISORIES  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 496

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Here are the CP coverage plans as of 19:30 EDT. An updated advisory will move around 23:30. The editor handling World news in Toronto can be reached at 416-507-2165.

SHAWALI KOT, Afghanistan \_ Canadian soldiers found no weapons or Taliban during a recent foray into a region considered an insurgent stronghold, but they did get an earful from villagers who accused them of failing to keep their promises on reconstruction projects. The villagers also complained about the way they've been treated by the Afghan National Police. 470 words. By Martin Ouellet. See CP Photos, Video. BC-Afghan-Cda-Patrol, 1st Writethru. Moved.

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. \_ A forecast for hot and dry weather on Florida's Space Coast has raised hopes that Wednesday's liftoff of the shuttle Endeavour will go ahead. Canadian astronaut Dave Williams is among seven crew members on board, heading to the International Space Station to do construction work. 500 words. By Sidhartha Banerjee. BC-Cda-Shuttle, 1st Writethru. Moved.

See also:

BC-Cda-Shuttle-Dextre. Moved.

HUNTINGTON, Utah \_ An owner of the Utah coal mine where six miners are trapped says it will take at least three days to reach them and it won't be known until then whether they are dead or alive. Rescuers make frustratingly slow progress in their attempt to break through, as a top mine executive angrily insists the cave-in was caused by an earthquake, and not risky mining practices or mistake by the men. 750 words. By Paul Foy. See Photo. BC-Utah-Mine-Collapse, 2nd Writethru. Moved.

SINGAPORE \_ Research aimed at disputing the scientific consensus on global warming is part of a huge misinformation campaign funded by some of the largest carbon polluters in the world, former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore says, singling out ExxonMobil as one of the biggest offenders. ExxonMobil says the allegation is "completely false." 600 words. By Gillian Wong. BC-Gore-Climate-Change. Moved.

HEBRON, West Bank \_ Israeli police using sledgehammers, chain saws and power clippers stormed a building in the biblical city of Hebron early Tuesday and dragged out hundreds of Jewish settlers who had holed up there illegally. Settlers spit and hurled stones, water, oil and cement powder as police, backed by army troops, broke through fortified doors and carried out the squatters one by one. 750 words. By Ben Hubbard. BC-Israel-Palestinians, 1st Writethru. Moved.

BEIJING \_ Rights groups ramped up pressure Tuesday on China's government to improve civil liberties and press freedoms \_ pledges Beijing promised to fulfil in its winning bid to host next year's Olympics. Amnesty International says in a new report that Chinese authorities have violated those promises by heightening abuse and surveillance of political and religious dissidents, jailing journalists and closing publications focusing on social development. 800 words. By Alexa Olesen. See Photo. BC-China-Human-Rights, 2nd Writethru. Moved.

See also:

BC-China-Rights-Cda, 2nd Writethru. Moved.

# CTV National News, Tuesday, August 7

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** ADVISORIES  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 412

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BEIJING \_ Two Canadians are among six protesters detained in China after they unfurled a banner on the Great Wall protesting China's presence in Tibet; the Canadians are Melanie Raoul and Sam Price, both of Vancouver; to get around Chinese censors, the activists sent live video via cellphone camera of the banner's unfurling back to New York, where it was quickly posted to the Internet. MAIN ELEMENTS CVD.

HUNTINGTON, Utah \_ There is a major setback in rescue efforts at a Utah mine where six miners are trapped; a mine executive says seismic activities have shut down rescue efforts. CVD.

MINNEAPOLIS \_ Minnesota releases new video of the bridge collapse last week. MAIN ELEMENTS CVD.

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. \_ After ten years of waiting, Canadian astronaut Dave Williams will return to space; the Endeavour is scheduled to launch Wednesday; there is a new system in place that allows the shuttle to get electricity from the space station. MAIN ELEMENTS CVD.

UNDATED \_ New lava is flowing from the Kilauea volcano in Hawaii. CHECKING.

TROIS-RIVIERES, Que. \_ Quebec police begin to use checkpoints in Trois-Rivieres to canvass motorists for information on a nine-year-old girl who has been missing from the community for a week. CVD.

UNDATED \_ The Portuguese newspaper Jornal de Noticias reports that sniffer dogs found specks of blood on a wall in the hotel room in the southern resort town of Praia da Luz where Madeleine McCann vanished in May. UPCOMING.

LONDON \_ British officials now believe the foot-and-mouth outbreak affecting farmers in southern England originated at a vaccine lab; it is possible that human movement spread the virus; the virus is incredibly contagious. CVD.

UNDATED \_ CTV News learns that the federal government is about to protect thousands of square kilometres in Canada's Far North from any mining or oil and gas development; Environment Minister John Baird will be in the Northwest Territories to make the announcement tomorrow. CVD.

UNDATED \_ No one individual is to blame and no charges will be laid in the friendly fire death of Canada's Pte. Robert Costall in Afghanistan, a new report says. CVD.

HEBRON, West Bank \_ Israeli police forcibly remove Jewish squatters who were holed up in several apartments in the market area of the biblical city of Hebron; the army makes clear it would not tolerate any form of mutiny by sentencing a dozen soldiers, including two commanders, to brief terms in jail. CVD.

UNDATED \_ Russia's navy is planning to operate out of Syria; the new Russian strategy will put warships back in the Syrian Port of Tartus. NOT MATCHING.

CP Toronto

# Taliban warns of more kidnappings as Bush, Karzai rule out concessions

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07

**KEYWORDS:** INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

**PUBLICATION:** cpw

**WORD COUNT:** 311

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GHAZNI, Afghanistan (AP) \_ A purported Taliban spokesman on Tuesday said a meeting between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U.S. President George W. Bush had ``no result."

The spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, said Bush and Karzai must accept Taliban demands that militant prisoners be released in exchange for the lives of 21 South Korean hostages or there will be a ``bad result."

The militants kidnapped 23 Korean aid workers travelling by bus from Kabul to Kandahar on July 19. Two male hostages have been executed.

Ahmadi said the Taliban's demands remain the same. ``Bush and Karzai have to accept the Taliban conditions otherwise they will see a very bad result for Korean hostages," Ahmadi said.

The Afghan and U.S. presidents ruled out making any concessions to the Taliban militants during their meetings Sunday and Monday at Camp David, Maryland.

In South Korea, relatives of the hostages expressed disappointment Tuesday that the presidential summit failed to produce concrete measures to bring the captives home.

``We could barely sleep while waiting for the results of the summit meeting, as we were full of such high hope and expectations that the release and safe return of our family members abducted there is up to the meeting of two leaders," said Cha Sung-min, a spokesman for relatives of the hostages, at their Saemmul Community Church in Bundang, south of Seoul.

``The result, however, turned out to be falling short of actively saving their precious lives," he said.

South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon said the results of the summit were anticipated and cautioned that the country should be prepared for a protracted standoff, noting that other hostages in Afghanistan had been held an average of 35 days.

Song also said none of the captives were suffering from critical health problems.

``The hostages can't be perfectly healthy after nearly 20 days in captivity. In that sense, they are not healthy on the whole," Song told reporters, according to Yonhap news agency. ``There has been no symptom of any of the hostages being critically ill."

# 20 Taliban killed in attack on base in southern Afghanistan

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL  
**PUBLICATION:** bnw  
**WORD COUNT:** 60

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KABUL, Afghanistan – A group of 75 Taliban militants tried to overrun a U.S.-led coalition base in southern Afghanistan today.

The coalition says the rare frontal attack left more than 20 militants dead.

A coalition statement says a joint Afghan-U.S. force used mortars and machine guns to repel the attack on Camp Anaconda in Uruzgan province.

The statement says almost two dozen insurgents were killed.

It says two girls and two Afghan soldiers were also wounded during the attack.

(AP)

# INDEX:Defence, International

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL  
**PUBLICATION:** bnw  
**WORD COUNT:** 77

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SHAWALI KOT, Afghanistan – Villagers in Afghanistan have complained to Canadian troops about the way they've been treated by their own police.

The villagers say Taliban insurgents are not in their area.

They told Canadians patrolling the Shawali Kot area that they have had more trouble from members of the Afghan National Police.

They accuse the police of theft and demanding money from farmers.

Canadian military officials say it's difficult to know whether the allegations are true.

Warrant Officer Hani Massouh says the best the Canadian military can do is to help the Afghan National Police become more professional and effective.

(BN)

# INDEX:Defence, International, Justice, Politics

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07

**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS

**PUBLICATION:** bnw

**WORD COUNT:** 122

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OTTAWA – Canadian military officials say no charges will be laid in the friendly–fire death of a Canadian soldier last year in Afghanistan.

A report into the March 2006 death of Pte. Robert Costall found that he was killed by gunfire from a U.S. soldier during an attack of 'unprecedented intensity' by Taliban forces.

The firefight also injured three other Canadian soldiers, killed a U.S. soldier and injured another.

Last week, a U.S. army investigator recommended no charges be filed against the American machine–gunner who killed Costall.

Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier says he's satisfied with the board's findings and that new rules have been incorporated into the military's standard operating procedures to improve the safety of soldiers.

In a statement, Costall's family said he should be remembered for what he lived for, rather than how he died.

(BN)

# Afghan–Kidnappings

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**DATE:** 2007.08.07  
**KEYWORDS:** INTERNATIONAL  
**PUBLICATION:** bnw  
**WORD COUNT:** 142

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GHAZNI, Afghanistan -- A purported Taliban spokesman says a meeting between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U-S President Bush had ``no result," and militant demands must be met if 21 South Korean hostages are to be released alive.

The spokesman (Qari Yousef Ahmadi), says there will be a ``bad result" if Bush and Karzai don't accept Taliban demands for the release of militant prisoners in exchange for the freedom of the Korean hostages.

Governor Marajudin Pathan, the leader in Ghazni province where the Koreans were kidnapped, says South Korean officials and Taliban militants will determine a location today for their first face-to-face talks over the hostages' fate.

The militants kidnapped 23 Korean aid workers travelling by bus from Kabul to Kandahar on July 19th.

Two male hostages have been executed.

The Afghan and U.S. presidents ruled out making any concessions during their meetings Sunday and yesterday at Camp David, Maryland.

(AP)

RvA



# PM plots overhaul of cabinet

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**IDNUMBER** 200708080175  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Met  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A01  
**BYLINE:** Tonda MacCharles, Richard Brennan and Les Whittington  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 812

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper is expected to make significant changes to his cabinet next week in the lead-up to a major new agenda-setting throne speech in the fall, government sources say.

The shuffle is needed because polling commissioned by the federal government shows the Conservatives have not succeeded in winning majority support for their priorities or overall performance in major urban centres like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, where they hold only a few seats.

Senior advisers in cabinet ministers' offices were asked at the beginning of the summer to provide recommendations for new policy directions that could be written into a throne speech or into new "mandate letters" to cabinet ministers.

Now, with all cabinet ministers ordered to Ottawa for the week of Aug. 13, it is expected there will be a major shuffle, not just tinkering, a senior government source said yesterday.

"If it was just a small shuffle of one or two people then why would everyone be asked to be in town?" the source said.

The House of Commons is slated to return Sept. 18 but there has been speculation that Harper will prorogue Parliament, setting the stage for a new session and Speech from the Throne some time after the Ontario election on Oct. 10.

Harper wants to rearrange cabinet responsibilities before his meeting Aug. 20 and 21 at Montebello, Que., with U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Felipe Calderon. The government source said it is difficult to know how big the shuffle will be because Harper "holds the cards so close to his chest on these."

"It seems to all revolve around (Defence Minister Gordon) O'Connor and (Revenue Minister) Carol Skelton, now that she has announced that she is not running again," the source said.

Much speculation suggests the Prime Minister is not out to bring in new blood to the 32-member cabinet, but to broaden the skills of ministers already within his inner circle now that the government appears to be shifting gears and looking to a longer term in power – to October 2009, which was fixed as the date for the next election in legislation that passed in June.

But not all are willing to second-guess the boss.

"He's got some good people not in cabinet right now who would be good cabinet members," said a second senior government source. "(Skelton's) department is a good one if you're coming in as your first portfolio.

"I think the team he has now has been doing a good job. Could he improve on the team by giving people with certain skill sets a different department? ... Maybe. Does he have people on the bench who are playing in the farm team that he thinks are now ready? Maybe."

In fact, speculation has it that three other cabinet ministers may not run again in the next election – possibly providing Harper other openings.

They are: International Trade Minister David Emerson, who faces re-election hurdles in his Vancouver riding after switching from the Liberals; Immigration Minister Diane Finley, who is battling thyroid disease, but doesn't yet qualify for a pension, having just been elected in 2004; and Veterans Affairs Minister Greg Thompson, first elected 10 years ago in his New Brunswick Southwest riding.

None has publicly announced his or her intentions.

Still, despite all the predictions that O'Connor is headed for the door, three Conservative sources yesterday downplayed the chances Harper would move O'Connor out of defence – precisely because to do so would be seen as caving to pressure to oust him.

One frankly acknowledged the government has not successfully communicated its mission in Afghanistan to Quebecers, but said the problem is not just O'Connor's poor French; it's the lack of support from his other ministerial colleagues.

"I think in Quebec we could do more, and we should and we will," said the insider.

"His colleagues who can speak French must do more."

But if Harper does move to replace O'Connor, the two people considered possible replacements are Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and Industry Minister Maxime Bernier, in part because they speak French.

Finally, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, once seen as among the cabinet's most sure-footed performers, has stumbled significantly in the past five months, said a Conservative source, citing Flaherty's backtrack on a March budget measure to eliminate a tax break for corporations investing abroad.

The business community condemned the move as destructive and badly conceived, and the source said the Prime Minister's office was irritated by Bay Street's unanticipated reaction.

As well, Flaherty's plan to smooth over longstanding revenue-sharing disputes with the provinces left the Conservatives in a nasty showdown with Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams, Nova Scotia Premier Rodney MacDonald and Saskatchewan's Lorne Calvert.

All that followed a firestorm of criticism that hit the Conservative government after Flaherty convinced Harper to crack down on income trusts last fall.

Nonetheless, there is no sense around the federal finance department yet of an impending move to shift Flaherty out of the high-profile portfolio.

Doing so might be seen as an admission that Harper's and Flaherty's surprise decision to tax income trusts was a major mistake, a perception the Prime Minister would not want to encourage.

However, Flaherty, who has been in Australia for meetings and a few days of down time, is expected back in Ottawa by Monday – in time for a shuffle.

The last Conservative cabinet shuffle was in January and, even then, many were surprised at how many people were involved.

# Cabinet needs more than a shuffle

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**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** Editorial  
**PAGE:** AA06  
**BYLINE:** Carol Goar  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 570

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Anyone who remembers how Tony Clement handled the SARS outbreak that shook Toronto in 2003 would consider him a capable minister and good communicator.

But since he joined Stephen Harper's cabinet, the former Ontario health minister has all but disappeared. His chief task seems to be explaining why things aren't happening: why medical wait-time guarantees aren't in place, why Canada isn't delivering low-cost AIDS medications to Africa, why Ottawa isn't setting limits on artery-clogging trans fats.

Anyone who remembers how Monte Solberg held the previous Liberal government to account, as opposition finance critic, would consider him a bright, energetic politician who does his homework.

But since he became minister of human resources and social development, he has fallen silent. His department, which cries out for strong leadership, seems to lack both drive and direction.

Anyone who remembers how Lawrence Cannon built his reputation in the Quebec National Assembly in the 1980s and '90s would consider him a minister who knows how to get things done.

But under his direction, the federal transport department seems to be stuck in neutral. The latest example: Buyers of fuel-efficient cars who applied for the \$2,000 ecoAuto rebates promised in the government's March 19 budget, still haven't received a cent.

Anyone who remembers how Diane Ablonczy helped found the Reform party, build it into a credible political force and smooth its merger with the Progressive Conservative party would consider the Calgary lawyer one of the most intelligent, reliable performers in the Tory caucus.

She didn't even make it into Harper's cabinet.

Some political observers – not this writer – would also include former Progressive Conservative leader Peter MacKay and Liberal defector David Emerson on the list of ministers who had impressive records before joining the Harper's cabinet.

By any count, there is a lot of wasted talented on the Conservative front bench.

The only two ministers who have distinguished themselves are Jim Flaherty at finance and Jim Prentice at Indian affairs.

It is puzzling that, with so much apparent ability at his disposal, Harper has such a low-wattage cabinet.

Possibly – but not plausibly – all of his key ministers (except Flaherty) are in the wrong posts. Maybe Clement would be better in a high-pressure role. Maybe Solberg belongs in an economic portfolio. Maybe Cannon needs more scope to be creative. But most seasoned politicians can adapt to different ministerial assignments.

Conceivably – but not credibly – the problem is money. Perhaps Harper's ministers don't have the funds to tackle the challenges they see. But that doesn't jibe with the surpluses Ottawa keeps chalking up. Nor does it account for ministers' unwillingness to speak publicly or act without clearance from above.

The most believable explanation is that Harper's cabinet is a reflection of his leadership style. He runs the show. He speaks for the government.

It does minimize the risk of mistakes or mixed messages to have a Prime Minister who oversees all the files and makes all the announcements.

It allows Harper to showcase his prodigious appetite for work and his ability to direct a large, complex organization.

And it keeps gaffe-prone ministers out of serious trouble.

But these benefits come at a price. Harper's approach stifles innovation. It prevents the government from responding expeditiously to public concerns. It reduces capable ministers to ciphers.

Moreover, the Prime Minister is not getting the result he wants. His party is stalled in the public opinion polls. Its odds of winning a parliamentary majority are no better than they were 18 months ago.

Harper's priorities – law and order, lower taxes, Senate reform, a muscular defence policy – keep getting eclipsed by issues he doesn't want to talk about: climate change, equalization payments, foreign takeovers, military casualties in Afghanistan.

It looks as if the Prime Minister could use some help. It also looks as if he has colleagues with the skills, experience and intelligence to provide it.

A smart boss doesn't squander resources and squelch initiative.

Carol Goar's column appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

# Harper may address Australia parliament on 9/11 anniversary; PM asked to step in after Japan's Abe calls off planned speech

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**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
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**EDITION:** Met  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A16  
**BYLINE:** Alexander Panetta  
**SOURCE:** Canadian Press  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 224

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been asked to speak to an international audience about the war on terrorism on the emotionally charged anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

The Prime Minister is considering an offer from his Australian counterpart John Howard to speak to his country's parliament on Sept. 11, Canadian officials confirmed.

The Prime Minister was originally scheduled to deliver an address on Sept. 12 but has been asked by his Australian hosts to make the speech a day earlier than expected.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had been expected to make the speech on the solemn anniversary but a political crisis at home forced him to cancel those plans.

Canadian officials said yesterday they were looking to rearrange the Prime Minister's plans to fulfill the request.

The Prime Minister will already be in Australia that week for the Asia– Pacific summit.

"It's obviously an honour to go to an allied country to address their parliament," a senior government official said.

"We are ensuring that Canada's voice is heard on the world stage and we view this as an important opportunity to speak."

The official said Canada and Australia share a number of common ties, including their military and economic commitment to Afghanistan.

The ties include a personal and professional bond between prime ministers Harper and Howard.

As well as being one of Harper's closest allies among foreign leaders and in the struggle against terrorism, Howard has also served as a model on domestic political tactics.

Harper based his announcement-a-day election strategy in the last campaign on the method used successfully by Howard.

In his last federal budget, Harper delivered a variety of fiscal goodies to the same suburban, middle-class families that the Aussie PM calls his "battlers. "

# 13 female business owners come to learn

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**IDNUMBER** 200708080101  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** Business  
**PAGE:** B02  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 128

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Several female business owners from Afghanistan will arrive in Oklahoma City next month as part of a program intended to teach 13 women about entrepreneurship.

The T. Boone Pickens Foundation, a charitable agency formed last year by Oklahoma oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens, donated \$50,000 (U.S.) to the Women Impacting Public Policy Institute to help fund the program.

Beginning this month, 13 Afghan participants will go to Midland, Mich., for five weeks and then to Washington in September for an institute conference. Four of the women will travel to Oklahoma City in September to shadow female business owners.

"It was incredible to see the work that these 13 women have accomplished in their country," said institute president Terry Neese. "Some of them have faced tremendous obstacles to operate their businesses."



# Baffling Afghan signals

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**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
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**SECTION:** Editorial  
**PAGE:** AA06  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 361

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What message, exactly, did Afghan President Hamid Karzai intend to deliver during his visit to Washington this week?

On Sunday, before he met U.S. President George Bush, Karzai struck a gloomy note. "The security situation in Afghanistan over the past two years has definitely deteriorated," he told CNN. "There is no doubt about that." A few days earlier in Kandahar, Ehsan Zia, one of Karzai's cabinet ministers, painted an even bleaker picture. If foreign troops pull out, "what has been achieved will collapse," he warned.

But by Monday, after talks with Bush, Karzai boldly described the Taliban as "defeated," a spent force. "They're not posing any threat to the government of Afghanistan," just terrorizing civilians, he said.

Whatever the truth, these bafflingly mixed signals carry a message for Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government as it contemplates Canada's next steps as our current combat mission begins to wind down next year. Going forward, we must not rely on Afghan assurances alone. Ottawa must undertake its own, critical, independent review before further committing troops or resources. That review must inform an intelligent debate in Parliament, cross-party consensus, and prudent action.

With 2,500 troops in Kandahar and a \$1.2 billion aid program, Canada already has done more than many of our allies in the 37-nation coalition. By February, 2009, when our current mission ends, we will have been fighting the Taliban for seven years, taking a disproportionate share of casualties.

Given the Canadian public's waning enthusiasm for this role, Harper faces a tough battle winning Parliament's approval for another combat rotation. But Canadian troops could shoulder duty in Kabul or other less contested areas, help train Afghan troops or serve as backup forces. Alternatively, Ottawa might focus on delivering aid.

Even putting a positive construction on the mixed signals from Kabul, the Afghans will need military support and aid for years to come.

Just how Canada can best help is a decision we should make only after carefully taking stock of the situation on the ground, with our allies. Breezy assurances from Kabul that the war is won, or dire warnings that it could be lost, are no basis for rational policy-making.

# Perogy Cat ships out to entertain the troops

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**IDNUMBER** 200708080101  
**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Culture  
**PAGE:** D1 / FRONT  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Bruce Stotesbury, Victoria Times Colonist /Victoria comic-book creator  
Gareth Gaudin has sent 2,000 copies of his Perogy Cat comics to Canadian soldiers serving in Afghanistan. ;  
**KEYWORDS:** 0  
**DATELINE:** VICTORIA  
**BYLINE:** Leah Collins  
**SOURCE:** Victoria Times Colonist; CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 569

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VICTORIA – A Perogy Cat doesn't look much like Bob Hope. Or Marilyn Monroe, for that matter. But the doughy, wide-eyed cartoon kitten that resembles a perogy is embarking on his own USO-style tour. And he's got orders to ship out from his creator, Victoria artist Gareth Gaudin.

Gaudin has published a comic book especially for the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan called The Perogy Cat for the Troops. He recently sent 2,000 copies to Afghanistan where he hopes they'll "spread like gossip."

The character might not have the same international cachet as other cartoon cats; you won't find one in your Happy Meal and it doesn't hate Mondays. But since appearing in Gaudin's self-published comic, Magic Teeth Dailies, the character has found a cult following. It has its own Facebook group, it has appeared on TV and at least 11 people (that Gaudin knows of) have its pillowy likeness tattooed on their bodies.

Perogy Cat has certainly marked his territory throughout Gaudin's comic shop, Legends. He peeps out from the picture window in paintings and Sharpie sketches. There's a stuffed doll prowling among the graphic novels on display. One painting hangs over the till with the proud tag: "as seen on Letterman."

No joke. Ed Robertson from the Barenaked Ladies sported a Perogy Cat button on the show. He has been a fan since Gaudin traded some issues of Magic Teeth for tickets to BNL's Victoria show.

Gaudin says demand from passersby, intrigued by the cute kitty in the shop window, led him to compile a family-friendly Perogy Cat comic this spring, made up of the character's appearances in Magic Teeth.

He credits his wife for suggesting the armed forces project. The two were reminiscing about the reruns of Bob Hope USO shows they had watched while growing up. A Perogy Cat comic, they figured, could be just as amusing as old Bob whacking golf balls in the dunes.

And Gaudin had a hunch the troops would appreciate it. A quarter of his subscribers are in the army and navy. About a month ago, he started asking his military customers if they thought it was a good idea.

Leading seaman Jason Aucoin was one of those guys. His emphatic response: "Oh, yeah."

Aucoin regularly brings a stack of comics with him when at sea, including Gaudin's titles. "You don't get a lot of time to yourself. If you can climb in with a book and escape from everything else, it's a nice little vacation, even if it's only for 20 or 30 minutes," he said.

Gaudin's printer, South Island Print Services in Sidney, B.C., agreed to make up the order for free.

As for the content, it's a compilation of previously run Magic Teeth comic strips. The naughty bits he couldn't include in this spring's Perogy Cat collection made the cut, as did a few surreal strips involving the cat and a tank (included for some light military flavour).

It's the first time in Sandra Pinard's memory that anyone has shipped comic books to Afghanistan. Pinard is the deployment co-ordinator at the Military Family Resource Centre in Victoria. Her organization doesn't normally ship gifts from people without a relative serving overseas, but when Gaudin approached her with his idea, she decided to make an exception.

"I thought it was great. Unique, as well ... They love things to read, things that are quick. We couldn't send Harry Potter, for instance," she chuckles.

In the meantime, Gaudin will wait to find out how Perogy Cat is welcomed in Afghanistan. The comics should reach the country within the next four to six weeks.

# Taliban 'don't care who they kill or injure'; Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant returns with Edmonton soldiers after Afghan mission

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**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Cityplus

**PAGE:** B3

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Walter Tychnowicz, The Journal / Returning soldier Sgt. Jeff Daley embraces his daughter Kaelin, 4, as he speaks to the media at the Edmonton International Airport on Tuesday. ; Photo: Journal Stock / Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant ;

**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM

**DATELINE:** EDMONTON

**BYLINE:** Josh Wingrove

**SOURCE:** The Edmonton Journal

**WORD COUNT:** 476

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EDMONTON — Twelve Edmonton-area soldiers — including a former Afghanistan task force commander — begin an overdue vacation today after returning from an extended tour of duty in Afghanistan on Tuesday morning.

Among them is Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant, who led Canada's mission in Afghanistan from November last year until one week ago. Freshly promoted and relieved of his role as commander, Grant said development is the first priority for Canadian troops still in Afghanistan.

"The only reason we're doing security operations is so we can have an umbrella under which the development and diplomacy agendas are executed. And they are working," Grant said.

He emphasized the diplomatic and development efforts of Canada's "3D" approach to defence during his nine months.

Grant said task force members have helped improve Afghan health care, distribute vaccines, further stabilize the volatile Panjwayi and Zharey regions, hand out more than 600 infrastructure development grants and distribute food kits to 118,000 people under Grant's command.

The Afghan National Army has also grown during Grant's tenure, from 400 to nearly 3,500 soldiers, he said.

The biggest risks remaining for soldiers are makeshift roadside bombs and suicide bombers, he said.

"The Taliban have truly resorted to terrorist tactics, whether it's suicide bombers or roadside bombs. They attack indiscriminately. They don't care who they kill or injure," Grant said.

Grant's own convoy was attacked by a suicide bomber July 26, but there were no Canadian injuries.

Sixty-six Canadians have died in Afghanistan since 2002, including 22 during Grant's tenure. The last casualties came on July 4, when a roadside bomb killed six soldiers, three of them stationed in Edmonton.

"Young Canadians put their lives on the line on a daily basis, and some have paid the ultimate price. But the fact of the matter is they are doing it for a reason ... so that other parts of the mission can make a difference, that they can rebuild the hospitals, give people a good life, let boys and girls go to school in large numbers," Grant said.

He didn't weigh in on debate about Canada's role in Afghanistan.

"It's a political question. For the soldiers, it's only a question of the work continuing until the moment the government says the mission is finished," Grant said in French.

The 12 soldiers returned to open arms from friends and family Tuesday.

"It's wonderful. I can't explain the feeling," said Sgt. Jeff Daley, met by his wife Lea and daughter Kaelin, 4.

"It's a little bit surreal," added Capt. Jane Sparkes, of Edmonton.

Maj. Kevin Mead returned to his seven-year-old daughter Hannah and pregnant wife Tanya, 31. The family is taking advantage of his time back and heading to Disney World next month.

Soldiers smiled as they talked about success stories during their tour. Daley had a contest with colleagues to see who could get the most locals to return a friendly wave. His record was nine.

"Morale is very high. They're doing what they're trained to do," Mead said.

Grant himself was looking forward to a large steak and glass of red wine at his Edmonton-area home, he said.

"Every time I come back, it makes me realize how lucky we are to be Canadians. It's a great country to come from, and a great country to live in," he said.

The soldiers' nine-month tenure was longer than a standard six-month stay. About 250 Edmonton-based soldiers will come home in the next month.

Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche has replaced Grant as task force commander.

Grant will begin a new position in Ottawa next month.

[jwingrove@thejournal.canwest.com](mailto:jwingrove@thejournal.canwest.com)

# Canadian troops make difference

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**SOURCETAG** 0708080445

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 22

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by Larry Downing, Reuters Afghan President Hamid Karzai addresses a news conference at Camp David in Maryland on Monday.

**BYLINE:** PETER WORTHINGTON, TORONTO SUN

**WORD COUNT:** 565

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Encouraging news out of Afghanistan for Canadians was President Hamid Karzai's insistence in Washington that the Taliban posed no threat to his government.

A continuing threat to Afghan people, yes, but not to the regime as a whole.

It was an unusual observation by a ruler whose control in the country is claimed by critics to be precarious, possibly transitory and wholly dependant on the presence of foreign troops to keep barbarians from breaking down the gates.

We, in Canada and the U.S., are so consumed with casualties to our troops and the lack of a deadline for withdrawal that we risk losing sight of what has actually been accomplished.

While there's a long way to go, Afghanistan finally seems to be getting a national government, with a national army (for the first time in its history) and a national police force. While the Americans claim credit for training the army, a lot of the "boots-on-ground" credit should go to Canadian soldiers who have helped train portions of the army along Canadian army lines.

That is, individual officers and non-commissioned officers attached to the Afghan army units help guide Afghan commanders in the Canadian way of thinking, and have exerted considerable influence on this "new" army.

I recall asking Brig. Ahkter of the Afghan National Army (ANA) at Kabul's Camp Darulaman, during the 2004 presidential elections, what he was learning from Canadians training his troops.

A cheerful, robust, charismatic man, he grinned: "I have done a lot more killing than any Canadian, and I have a lot more experience at fighting — but the Canadians are teaching me discipline."

## KEY TO TRAINING

His "teacher" at the time was Maj. Brian Hynes of the Princess Pats — a field soldier, impatient with military bureaucracy, who was key to training this ANA brigade. Col. John Scott of the U.S. 1st Cavalry was ostensibly in charge, but clearly Hynes was blending and co-ordinating the natural guerrilla fighting expertise of Afghans into a cohesive, disciplined force. Not easy, but necessary. And effective.

If what was happening with the Afghan brigade that Hynes was helping was also happening in other ANA units, it becomes easier to understand Karzai's confidence in the future of his government.

It also indicates what the Canadian army has achieved, through its aggressive fighting role in Kandahar, where the Taliban is strongest. The Princess Pats and Royal Canadian Regiment have been dominant in the field and, to use the vernacular, have "kicked ass" with the Taliban and routed them on the battlefield.

Now the Taliban resort to roadside bombs. The Van Doos have scope to do more "reconstruction" work, as well as being ready to fight. (As an aside, it seems inevitable that the "enemy" will someday test the Van Doos, to see if they are as resolute in a battle as their predecessors.)

It's encouraging that Karzai feels his government is increasingly secure against the Taliban. And encouraging that the ANA is increasingly effective in taking over more responsibility for fighting. One assumes (hopes) the situation is similar with the police.

All the more reason for Canadians (and NATO) not to withdraw before the job is done.

At the same time as Karzai was making his Taliban observations during talks with President George W. Bush at Camp David, he also claimed Iran was his country's friend, contrary to Bush's assessment.

Karzai is not as concerned about Iran's nuclear ambitions as is Bush. While a nuclear-armed Iran is a fearsome spectre, it should also be noted that inside Iran there is a growing movement that is anti-mullah, anti-theocratic dictatorship.

Any U.S. invasion, or intrusion, would likely turn this potentially democratic surge into patriotic resistance on behalf of the anti-U.S. zealots. A Hobson's choice, but the concerns of Hamid Karzai should not be dismissed, as he is on the front line and the one at risk. KEYWORDS=CANADA

# Letters to the Editor Column

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**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** 14  
**COLUMN:** Letters to the Editor  
**WORD COUNT:** 557

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In response to a letter writer's concerns that sales taxes will go up to 10% and every item will be individually rounded up, the concept is somewhat off base.

No one should be talking about eliminating the cent in ticketed prices or calculations, just the physical penny itself. If you travel to various countries across the world, you can see the concept already in action.

A 97cents coffee is still 97cents, theoretically. But, if only buying one, you pay \$1.

If you bought two, it would be two times 97cents, equalling \$1.94 — rounded up to \$1.95, not \$2.

The only rounding occurs at the payment of the total — in some jurisdictions, only where physical currency is concerned.

You could still write a cheque or use a debit or credit card and pay an amount not rounded to the nearest 5cents.

RON GAUDET, Ottawa

(No doubt there will be plenty of confusion if the penny — the physical one, that is — disappears. But this idea seems like one that could work.)

Re: "Docs need a dose of honesty" (Aug. 2). Mihad Fahmy is right in her recent column in concluding that doctors should "tell us exactly what has happened to us in the course of receiving care." But an important question remains: Then what?

A dear friend of mine is awaiting her third surgery because of what she says was a doctor's initial mistake. Another friend and an acquaintance say they are disabled because of medical errors. Do they have any recourse? Maybe, but none that they feel is accessible.

Something must be done to provide patients with both answers and avenues for redress.

AMIRA ELGHAWABY, Ottawa

(Patients need to be made aware of the regulatory processes and structures that are in place for them to express concerns and take action when necessary)

The idea of one letter writer that South Korea ought to send another 500 soldiers to Afghanistan for every hostage killed by the Taliban has a lot of merit. It may seem that it will anger the hostage takers, but in reality, the hostage takers captured innocent peaceful people because they thought that it might reduce the number of



Korean soldiers in Afghanistan. If it had the opposite effect, then what would they do?

We may worry about angering hostage takers, but if we worried about angering someone every time a soldier acted like a soldier in a situation like this, what would soldiers be doing in Afghanistan besides having a tropical holiday? They need to be able to do their job, and there needs to be enough of them there to do it. As long as the Taliban are still taking hostages, then there probably are still not enough soldiers there.

JOHN ZYLSTRA, Bluesky, AB

(There is much to weigh in this debate, including hostages' lives)

So, Muslims can be branded "extreme" or "moderate" for differentiation like octane fuel, sports or alcohol drinkers. We must be unique that way, unless extreme or moderate Jews and Christians also exist in the human domain. Moderate implies sameness but at a lesser degree. I suppose that it has to do with some innate volatility only Muslims possess, and not our religious devotion. Why not just say violent or peaceful Muslims, a basic human character trait and behaviour? I find the wording inconsiderate, offensive and broad-brushing. How do we label someone who may be highly vocal but does not resort to force? Is he/she extreme or moderate? Ill-conceived name-calling is a poor reflection of the name-caller's attitude, low understanding, inadequate resolution skill and likely frustration.

If peaceful Muslims are expected to be drafted into promoting peace, they deserve minimum respect, not to be wrongly labelled and accused of muted silence should they choose not to echo mainstream sentiment, or risk being labelled extreme.

NAE ISMAIL, Ottawa

(Generalities do nothing to promote peace, no matter what religion you're referring to)

# Afghan villagers yell at Canuck soldiers over well

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**SOURCETAG** 0708080779  
**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 33  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** SHAWALI KOT, Afghanistan  
**WORD COUNT:** 198

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Canadian soldiers found no weapons or Taliban during a recent foray into a region considered an insurgent stronghold, but they did get an earful from villagers who accused them of failing to keep their promises.

"Canadians have come here three times before and promised (to give us a well) but they've done nothing," said Haji Noor Mohammad, a leader in the desolate, poverty-stricken district of Shawali Kot.

The five-day sortie by members of the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment ended yesterday with the soldiers having heard little from the villagers about the Taliban but plenty of griping about the "broken promises" of Canadians and Americans.

Everywhere they went, the Canadians were asked about the digging of new wells and the building of schools and mosques, while the Americans were criticized in one village for not building a school that was allegedly promised five years ago.

Discussing the Taliban was not uppermost on the minds of the villagers.

"Are the Taliban giving you problems?" Canadian Forces Capt. Stephane Girard asked Salim Ahmad, the leader of a village of about 100 people.

Ahmad's response, translated by an interpreter, was unequivocal: "There is no problem with the Taliban here."

He then went on to tell a visibly perplexed Girard that the Taliban have never been seen in the village.

Many of the locals kept their harshest words for the Afghan National Police.

"The police come here after the harvest and extort money from farmers," said Ahmad, echoing comments made in a neighbouring village. KEYWORDS=CANADA

# Home, sweet Troops return from Afghanistan to big hugs

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**SOURCETAG:** 0708080734

**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 5

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo by Tim Smith, Special to Sun Media Carla Bradley waits anxiously for the imminent return of her husband, Lt.-Col. Thomas Bradley, from Afghanistan. Waiting with Carla at the Edmonton International Airport yesterday are children Viktoria, 8, Charlotte, 6, and Alexander, 3.

**BYLINE:** RENATO GANDIA, SUN MEDIA

**WORD COUNT:** 248

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Lt.-Col. Tom Bradley didn't waste any time catching up with his wife and three kids after arriving yesterday from an extended tour of duty in Afghanistan.

Cameras flashed as Bradley huddled in a corner and chatted with his two daughters and son.

"We'll have a big family hug," his wife Carla Bradley tearfully told reporters.

Meanwhile, Sgt. Jeff Daley said he planned to put on some music and dance with his four-year-old daughter, Kaelin, as soon as he got home.

The emotional reunion of 12 Edmonton-based soldiers, their families and friends became the centre of attention at the Edmonton International Airport.

"It's wonderful. I can't explain the feeling," Daley said.

While being away from his family was hard, he said it was worth it, because the soldiers' mission was successful as evidenced by the stability in Kandahar compared to nine months ago when they deployed.

Afghans have become friendlier because now they recognize that the soldiers are there on a reconstruction mission, he said.

Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant, former top soldier of task force Afghanistan, told a press conference Canada's mission was indeed a success.

However, one thing he failed in, he said, was to convince Afghanistan-based reporters to report on progress in Kandahar.

The core of reporting from the region mostly dealt with combat operations and deaths, he said. "That's an important part of the story, there's no doubt."

But soldiers knowingly risk their lives so that the mission of rebuilding hospitals, giving people a good life, and letting boys and girls go to school can happen, he said.

"That's the message that we just can't get across, but it's happening."

Grant said health care has improved tremendously in Afghanistan.

Kandahar, the bread basket of southern Afghanistan, has recovered from last year's drought with the help of numerous irrigation canals soldiers built, he added.

People starved last year and moved out of their homes in search of food.

But this year, it's a bumper crop and people have moved back to their homes, Grant said.

Soldiers have also been successful in defeating improvise explosive devices (IEDs), the general said.

"We don't broadcast that. We don't publish those results, but we do learn and we have been successful."

But the Taliban will remain a tough foe for NATO soldiers, he added.

"The Taliban have truly resorted to terrorist activities, suicide bombs or roadside bombs. They attack indiscriminately.

"They don't care who they kill or injure." KEYWORDS=CANADA

# Your Call Column Edmonton Sun online poll

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
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**COLUMN:** Your Call  
**WORD COUNT:** 33

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## TODAY'S QUESTION

Should Canada agree to keep troops in Afghanistan beyond the planned 2009 departure?

- Yes, in whatever capacity is necessary
- Yes, but only in non-combat roles
- Bring them home now
- Bring them home in 2009

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## YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Will you vote in the October municipal election?

- 69% – Yes, it's my democratic right
- 14% – No, my vote won't change anything
- 9% – Maybe, I'll see how I feel
- 8% – Can't, I'm not eligible

Vote at [edmontonsun.com](http://edmontonsun.com)

# A proud Canadian

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**PAGE:** 5  
**BYLINE:** RENATO GANDIA  
**WORD COUNT:** 178

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While on duty in the Kandahar region for nine months, Capt. Jane Sparkes of Lord Strathcona Horse, did not see any women in the villages and cities she toured.

"I just felt proud being a Canadian woman," she told Sun Media, after she was reunited yesterday with her fiancé following her Afghanistan stint.

Aside from missing Canada's greenery, having her own place, the food, and just having a normal life, her time in Kandahar made her feel proud she lives in a country that gives her the freedom to do what she pleases as a citizen. Coming home was "pretty surreal" after being deployed for a long time, she said.

Ashley Wiebe, not related to the late Pte. Joel Wiebe, did not sleep the night before her boyfriend Benoit Sorel arrived.

She was busy preparing, making sure there's cold beer in the fridge for his homecoming.

Wiebe and Genevieve Sorel, Benoit's sister, made posters to welcome the soldiers and carried the Canadian flag.

"We all missed you Benoit. Welcome home Strathconas," read the posters.

"I'm completely relieved that he's finally home and I don't have to worry anymore," she told reporters.

Wiebe said they have no big plans, just to relax, hang out and talk about both their experiences.

"It's hard to talk to someone on the computer," she said.

Wiebe said there were many anxious moments every time she heard that NATO soldiers were killed or injured by terrorists.

What she wishes for her boyfriend is to be able to sleep in peace and quiet – "no bullets or airplanes flying over his head." **KEYWORDS=CANADA**

# Aid worker says boost Afghan aid

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**SOURCETAG** 0708080651

**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 13

**ILLUSTRATION:** photo of KATE MACISAAC World Vision

**BYLINE:** SHAWN LOGAN, SUN MEDIA

**WORD COUNT:** 96

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Canada needs to boost its humanitarian funding for Afghanistan to the same level of its military commitment, says a local aid worker who says she believes the war-torn country is on the precipice of failing or succeeding.

Calgarian Mary Kate MacIsaac, 38, is one of 10 international workers for World Vision in Afghanistan, focusing on re-establishing the education system and stabilizing regions that stagnated under the Taliban regime.

In Calgary for a brief visit before returning to the nation of 31 million people next week, MacIsaac said more effort is required to prevent the country from slipping into anarchy. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Brooks approves troops decals

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**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 8  
**BYLINE:** PABLO FERNANDEZ  
**WORD COUNT:** 121

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Brooks yesterday became the latest southern Alberta community to approve attaching a yellow ribbon to city vehicles as a way of supporting soldiers overseas.

A motion put before council yesterday that will see the entire fleet of municipal vehicles sport "Support Our Troops," yellow ribbons decal, was passed unanimously in less than a minute, said Brooks Mayor Don Weisbeck.

"We did this because we realize that we need to support our troops regardless of how one may feel about the war in Afghanistan," he said.

"This is not about whether or not you agree with the war.

"It's about our young men and women fighting and dying on our behalf."

The decision in Brooks comes a couple of weeks after Calgary aldermen voted down such a motion, choosing instead to sell the decals and donate the proceeds to the Calgary Military Family Resource Centre.

Airdrie, Strathmore and Medicine Hat are either considering or have already ordered yellow ribbons for their vehicles. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA



# THE AFGHAN MISSION Learning the ropes in a land of tradition Newly arrived Vandoos must balance security concerns against possibility of alienating local population

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**IDN:** 072180227

**DATE:** 2007.08.06

**PAGE:** A8 (ILLUS)

**BYLINE:** ALEX DOBROTA

**SECTION:** International News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** ARGHANDAB VALLEY, AFGHANISTAN

**WORDS:** 828

**WORD COUNT:** 785

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ALEX DOBROTA ARGHANDAB VALLEY, AFGHANISTAN The column of soldiers made its way swiftly around the mud-thatched huts, armed with rocket launchers and a medium-calibre machine gun, intent on clearing the village of any Islamic extremists that might be hiding there.

Instead, the soldiers of B Company of the Royal 22nd regiment found a line of village elders shouting and wielding sickles.

"We don't want to see you in our houses," hollered one village elder, addressing the troops through an interpreter hired by the Canadian Forces. "We have women inside. We are poor people. There is no Taliban, no rockets, no mines." That day, as in the previous three days of patrols along the Arghandab River Valley north of Kandahar, the soldiers of B Company fired not a shot, saw no insurgents and no explosive devices.

But neither did they search a house or any car carrying burka-clad Afghan women. The soldiers found themselves mired in another type of confrontation – one that has bedevilled Canada's efforts in Afghanistan and one that pits liberal-minded Western values against the conservative traditions of Kandahar province.

Fresh from Quebec to replace the troops of the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, the regiment – popularly known in Canada as the Vandoos – is learning the hard lessons of Afghanistan. Among those lessons is the need to balance security concerns against the very real possibility of alienating local people and thereby enlarging the recruitment pool for the Taliban.

Even with weeks of training, many soldiers find that balancing act a challenge.

"It doesn't help us, having to deal with all of their traditions," said Master Corporal Samuel Gauthier. He is a veteran of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is a country with a large Muslim population. "It jams sticks in our wheels." Perhaps nowhere was the cultural clash more evident in recent days than at a joint checkpoint the soldiers set up on Saturday with the Afghan National Police. The Vandoos had intended to screen all cars for weapons or explosives that were possibly destined for insurgents in the Kandahar area.

"We'll do this as a customs check," a confident Lieutenant Jocelyn Demetre told his troops.

THE AFGHAN MISSION Learning the ropes in a land of tradition Newly arrived Vandoos must balance security

But his plan promptly ran afoul of Afghan National Police sector commander, Mahman Qasim, 25, who joined the force shortly after the U.S. invasion in 2002 and quickly rose through the ranks.

"We are Afghans," Mr. Qasim said proudly. "We object to you screening the cars carrying women. If you make people angry, they will side with the Taliban." The Taliban are known to smuggle explosives into the Kandahar City area along that road. Two weeks ago, Taliban fighters ambushed an Afghan police checkpoint and killed several officers.

Still, Lt. Demetre weighed the opposing challenges and grudgingly relented; his men did not search cars that contained women. A female soldier from another unit of Company B was later called to the scene, and she briefly screened a few cars under the surprised gaze of locals, amazed to see a woman in uniform.

Mr. Qasim later acknowledged that the Taliban use cars carrying women to transport arms and explosives, but said that he can't do anything about it.

It was also on Saturday that the Vandoos emerged from the air-conditioned intimacy of their light armoured vehicles, where many of them pore over men's magazines, to face the angry villagers wielding sickles.

There again, Lt. Demetre relented and instructed his soldiers not to enter any homes. They quickly patrolled the dirt lanes and shook the village elders' hands. Lt. Demetre listened to their requests – mainly for help in building wells, an invaluable asset in this arid region – before reboarding the LAVs.

Lt. Demetre later deemed both the village patrol and the checkpoint a success.

"It's these same people who can plant an IED," he said. "And we were welcomed around here so far." But his confidence in the local lore was dealt a blow yesterday in a conversation with his interpreter, a local Kandahari. In a half-joking manner, Lt. Demetre asked the man, who is known only as Jake, whether he believes that suicide bombers will go to heaven and marry seven virgins.

Not suicide bombers who attack Canadian troops, the man answered, avoiding the question. "You didn't destroy our mosques, you didn't enter into our houses and you didn't stop us from praying," said Jake, who supports the Canadian mission and dreams of one day immigrating to Canada.

"But if we did stop you from praying?" asked Lt. Demetre.

"Then there would be a jihad . Then, even somebody like me could do something like that," came the decided answer. And in that case, yes, he would go to heaven and marry seven virgins, Jake said.

"That made me reflect a bit," Lt. Demetre said. "After all, we are here to make sure nothing like this lands on our doorstep. We're here to protect our values."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: strife; defence; internal security; social structure

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Taliban

THE AFGHAN MISSION Learning the ropes in a land of tradition Newly arrived Vandoos must balance security

# THE AFGHAN MISSION Latest developments

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**IDN:** 072200222

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**BYLINE:**

**SECTION:** International News

**SOURCE:** AP CP

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:**

**WORDS:** 335

**WORD COUNT:** 326

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Sources: AP, CP and Guardian Taliban attacks U.S. base A group of 75 Taliban militants tried to overrun a U.S.-led coalition base in southern Afghanistan, a rare frontal attack that left more than 20 militants dead, the coalition said in a statement.

The insurgents attacked Firebase Anaconda from three sides, using gunfire, grenades and 107 mm rockets, the coalition said.

A joint Afghan-U.S. force repelled the attack with mortars, machine guns and air support.

"Almost two dozen insurgents were confirmed killed in the attack," the statement said. Two girls and two Afghan soldiers were wounded during the fight in Uruzgan province, it said.

Friendly-fire death ruling Canadian military officials say no charges will be laid in the friendly-fire death of a Canadian soldier last year in Afghanistan.

A report into the March, 2006, death of Private Robert Costall found that he was killed by gunfire from a U.S. soldier during an attack of "unprecedented intensity" by Taliban forces.

In July, a U.S. army investigator recommended no charges be filed against the U.S. machine-gunner who killed Pte. Costall.

Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier says he's satisfied with the board's findings and that new rules have been incorporated into the military's standard operating procedures to improve the safety of soldiers.

face-to-face hostage talks South Korean officials and Taliban leaders were expected to agree on a meeting place to negotiate the release of 21 South Korean hostages, an Afghan politician said. The South Koreans and Taliban representatives have been talking by phone for several days and planned to determine a location for their first face-to-face talks by the end of the day.

U.K. focuses on Afghanistan The British Foreign Office has decided that Afghanistan, and not Iraq, is the front line in its battle to defeat terrorism, even if it may take decades to improve the country, the Guardian reported.

The British military also wants to concentrate its forces in Helmand province.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: United States; Great Britain; Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; deaths; accidents; hostages; south koreans

PERSONAL NAME: Robert Costall

# THE AFGHAN MISSION The villagers, the vanquished and the Vandoos Quebec's Royal 22nd takes on the challenge of trying to win Afghan hearts while carrying the stigma of operating as a foreign army

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**BYLINE:** ALEX DOBROTA

**SECTION:** International News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** SHAH WALI KOT, AFGHANISTAN

**WORDS:** 903

**WORD COUNT:** 857

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ALEX DOBROTA SHAH WALI KOT, AFGHANISTAN Like many Afghan village elders, Haji Noor Mohammad has lost track of his exact age, but the long creases that line his face may well serve as a testament to the many years spent fearing foreign armies.

First, the Soviet Red Army indiscriminately bombed the arid countryside north of Kandahar and killed 40 of his fellow villagers on one occasion, Mr. Mohammad said. Then the Americans came. During the past two years, three Canadian patrols have also arrived, each pledging to help the villagers with building wells. So far, the village elder said, each has failed to live up to its promises.

So when armoured vehicles rolled through the dirt lanes of his village once again two days ago, sending children crying into the houses, Mr. Mohammad had little patience to answer the questions of the soldiers with Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment.

"By God I tell you, I don't know where the Taliban live," he told Lieutenant Jocelyn Demetre, speaking in Pashto through an interpreter.

"We are poor people. We are scared of you and we are scared of the Taliban. . . . You should not come around with tanks. Our people will leave this place." Such is the challenge the Royal 22nd, known as the Vandoos, will be grappling with during the next six months. They will try, as other Canadian troops have tried before them, to persuade villagers across Kandahar province to collaborate with them against Islamic extremists.

Equipped with helmets, ballistic eyewear, body armour and a multipocketed vest that makes them look like futuristic androids beside the traditionally dressed villagers, the Canadians will also carry the stigma of operating as a foreign army in a country that has weathered invasions since antiquity.

Still, the soldiers make an effort. In a bid to observe local customs, commanding officers with B Company sat bareheaded at shuras – meetings with elders – in villages across Shah Wali Kot. Last year, a Canadian soldier received an axe blow to his head after removing his helmet at a similar gathering.

"We're trying to win their hearts," Lt. Demetre said. "They respect courageous men." But courage alone has failed to entirely sway the villagers of Shah Wali Kot. The soldiers of B Company returned to Kandahar base

yesterday, after four days of crisscrossing the scorched region, with only some generic information on Taliban tactics. But they had no exact knowledge of hideouts or weapons caches, and had not engaged the enemy.

The Vandoos were briefed before the mission that the Taliban have organized a shadow government in the area, but villagers questioned by the troops said they had never encountered the Islamic fighters in their village. Instead, they all asked for wells and irrigation systems.

The region, often the stage of violent clashes between Taliban fighters and the International Security Assistance Force, is renowned for its lush orchards of pomegranate trees.

But years of war have damaged irrigation canals and the orchards, and drought has ravaged the crops. The Canadian International Development Agency said it has built more than 1,130 wells across Kandahar province and is planning to rebuild an irrigation dam in Shah Wali Kot.

However, the villagers there often fail to make the connection between Canadian troops and aid projects.

"We need wells," Mr. Mohammad said. He sat on a traditional rug below a thatched veranda, next to a hole in the ground – a work in progress dug with shovels by villagers, who climb down ladders to the shaft of the makeshift well.

"I will write that down," Lt. Demetre replied.

"That will be good," retorted Mr. Mohammad. "Because three times before, the Canadians have come, and promised, and haven't done anything." In the next hamlet of mud and straw houses, the Vandoos received an even colder reception. As a Canadian light-armoured vehicle manoeuvred to form a security perimeter, it rolled across an onion field, crushing part of the harvest and angering Niaz Mohammad, the field's owner.

"I worked for four months to grow this to sell it," a livid Mr.

Mohammad told Lt. Demetre. "This is my life." The troops left, promising to compensate Mr. Mohammad. But the villager remained skeptical. "You pay me now," he told Lt. Demetre.

"I won't see you again." Back at the base, Lt. Demetre said the mission was a success.

The Vandoos have made their presence known, he insisted. And while he said he intended to bring a supply of pens and notebooks for children during the next patrol, Lt. Demetre discarded the intimidating effect of the LAVs as a necessary evil.

"It's a show of force," he said.

"They're afraid?" piped in Sergeant Danny Saleh, who mans the 25 mm gun on the LAV's turret at times. "If they're afraid, then the others [the Taliban] will be afraid as well." But some soldiers said they wished they had used their weapons for more than deterrence, and voiced frustration at not having fought since having landed in Kandahar two weeks ago.

"That's what we're here for," said Master Corporal Samuel Gauthier, a hulk of a man, who does push-ups on the ramp of his LAV, even after walking for five kilometres across a jagged mountain range in 45 C heat. "And if it doesn't happen, we'll find it a little boring.

"We haven't come here just for the camping. We need some action."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

THE AFGHAN MISSION The villagers, the vanquished and the Vandoos Quebec's Royal 22nd takes on the

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Quebec; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: strife; defence; public relations

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban; Armed Forces

# GOVERNMENT POWERS Secret documents, secret challenges

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**BYLINE:**

**SECTION:** Editorial

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:**

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**WORD COUNT:** 452

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The government of Canada has given itself Draconian post-9/11 powers of secrecy, powers that are becoming apparent only now, in a controversy over the Canadian military's treatment of prisoners in Afghanistan.

These powers go much further than simply allowing the government to keep some documents secret to protect national security. If someone goes to court to challenge the secrecy of a particular document, the government has the right to keep that court challenge a secret.

If a court rules that a particular document should no longer be kept secret, the Attorney-General can override the ruling. The loop of secrecy may therefore be closed forever.

The public interest in Canada's treatment of prisoners in Afghanistan, and in what happens to those prisoners when they are transferred to Afghan authorities, is obvious. Canada is a signatory to international commitments that ban torture and prisoner abuse. The public has a right to know whether Canada is sticking to its commitments.

The Canadian government and military have made it clear they do not want the public to know. The government has denied that certain documents exist. The military has been blocking virtually all requests under access-to-information law for documents related to the detainees.

Repeatedly, senior ministers and military leaders have asserted that all is well.

Nothing changed until Canada's assurances were shown to be false.

Documents obtained by The Globe and Mail and University of Ottawa professor Amir Attaran suggested that three detainees may have been abused in Canadian custody. As a result, multiple inquiries into possible abuse are now under way. A Globe reporter uncovered allegations of abuse by Afghans of prisoners apparently transferred by Canadians.

Under political pressure, Canada acted to obtain permission to directly monitor the detainees' treatment.

The Canadian government's preference is to leave the detainee issue in the dark; the law apparently grants the government that right. Even when the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and Amnesty International went to court to demand that Canada make public certain documents related to the detainees, they were obliged to keep their court challenge secret for nearly a month before the Attorney-General gave permission



for them to reveal it.

There are times for keeping secrets – protecting intelligence from foreign governments, for instance – and times for looking under rocks, whether the government likes it or not. "The government executive could take any embarrassing secret, turn it into a shadow and hide it in a black box in a dark room," says Jason Gratl, president of the BCCLA. The law as it stands allows the government to stop the public from turning over those rocks, whether national security demands it or not. The law should be changed.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:freedom of information; civil rights; human rights; prisoners; strife; defence; government; political

# FOREIGN RELATIONS PM to address Australian Parliament on Sept. 11 Harper's speech moved up a day as political crisis forces Japanese leader to cancel

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**BYLINE:** DANIEL LEBLANC

**SECTION:** National News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** Ottawa ONT

**WORDS:** 599

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DANIEL LEBLANC OTTAWA Prime Minister Stephen Harper will be a fill-in for his Japanese counterpart when he speaks to the Australian Parliament on Sept.

11, Australian Prime Minister John Howard said yesterday.

Mr. Harper's office in Ottawa refused to confirm the speaking engagement, but Mr. Howard broke the news in Canberra earlier in the day.

"I am delighted to confirm that the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr.

Harper, has accepted the invitation to address a joint sitting ...

and I expect that will now be on Tuesday, 11 September," Mr. Howard said in the Australian Parliament.

Mr. Harper had originally been asked to speak on Sept. 12, while Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was scheduled to address Parliament on the 11th, the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

Mr. Howard said the current political crisis in Japan forced Mr.

Abe to change his plans.

Mr. Abe's ruling party captured only 37 of the 121 seats available in last month's election for the upper house of parliament, leaving him struggling to survive politically.

Mr. Harper will already be in Australia at the time, meeting with other leaders at the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit in Sydney on Sept. 8 and 9.

Senior Canadian officials, however, insisted yesterday they were still looking to see whether Mr. Harper's schedule could be adjusted to fit in the newly scheduled address.

"Can't confirm the Prime Minister's schedule, but if we did speak to the Commons [in Canberra], it would be an honour," a senior Canadian official said. "Prime Minister Howard spoke here and he invited the Prime Minister to have the same positive experience when he came to APEC." NDP Leader Jack Layton said that the speech will be an "important opportunity" for Mr. Harper to present Canadian values in Australia; in particular, to urge "aggressive action" on the climate-change front.

The Conservative governments in Australia and Canada have been accused of being laggards on the environmental file by activists around the world.

Between trips at home and abroad, the coming weeks will be charged for Mr. Harper. He is currently promoting his agenda for sovereignty in the North with a trip to the Arctic.

He is expected to shuffle his cabinet next week, with rumours flying in Ottawa that the first order of business will be replacing Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor.

There is also speculation, although no official confirmation, that Mr. Harper will prorogue Parliament in the near future and issue a Speech from the Throne in mid-October. The vote on the Conservative agenda for the future would be a confidence issue in the House.

Proroguing Parliament would allow for the by-elections in Quebec on Sept. 17 and the Ontario election on Oct. 10 before the House and the Senate come back for the fall in Ottawa.

It would allow Mr. Harper more time to recover from his trip to Australia before the opening of Parliament, which is scheduled for Sept. 17.

Mr. Harper is close to his Australian counterpart, who was the first foreign leader to visit the newly elected Conservative government last year.

Canada and Australia are also part of the international coalition that is at work in Afghanistan.

Mr. Harper will kick off a three-day Arctic tour by announcing today the expansion of a northern national park reserve and world heritage site by thousands of square kilometres, sources told The Canadian Press. It's the first of a series of announcements from the Prime Minister expected this week about efforts to assert sovereignty over the North.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Australia

SUBJECT TERM: visits; foreign relations; political

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Parliament

FOREIGN RELATIONS PM to address Australian Parliament on Sept. 11 Harper's speech moved 79p a day

# NATIONAL SECURITY: FOR THE RECORD Release of secret exchanges will help solve puzzle for Arar

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072200090

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**PAGE:** A1

**BYLINE:** COLIN FREEZE

**SECTION:** National News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:**

**WORDS:** 604

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COLIN FREEZE Key questions surrounding the Maher Arar scandal could finally be answered today after a judge ordered the Attorney-General to stop blocking publication of material that the federal government's lawyers have for years insisted must be kept secret for reasons of national security.

About 1,500 words of the O'Connor commission of inquiry are blacked out, with Ottawa arguing information from foreign intelligence partners should remain redacted.

Commission officials say the material to be released as early as today pertains to information about "human rights and torture issues." The main portion that observers are keen to read relate to searches undertaken by the RCMP four months after 9/11.

"On Jan. 22, 2002, Canadian agencies conducted simultaneous searches, pursuant to a number of locations in Ottawa, Toronto, and other Canadian cities," the report reads. Then, government-imposed asterisks begin to blot out the remarks of the inquiry commissioner, Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor: "[Censored]. . . The reliability of such information is always in question . . . If the information cannot be substantiated or corroborated, it is given little weight . . . [Censored]" Six small asterisks shield the substance of the section. But if lifted, they could speak to some much bigger issues.

After the al-Qaeda suicide attacks in the U.S., Canadian agencies zeroed in on several Arabs believed to have spent time in Afghanistan.

None of the targets was ever charged with a crime in Canada, but several were arrested during their international travels. It was in this period that Mr. Arar came to be wrongly defined by his connections to others.

One month after 9/11, he was spotted talking to a major target of the investigation, Abdullah Almalki. The fallout has been well chronicled by Judge O'Connor, who said police wrongly flagged Mr.

Arar as an "Islamic extremist" in an international lookout database.

Observers will be looking at this week's release of information for a greater insight into intelligence exchanges between Canadian officials and possibly Syria, a country with a poor human-rights record.

Even for Judge O'Connor, the precise information flow seems murky.

His inquiry was narrowly focused on Mr. Arar and he had no access to U.S. papers or officials after Washington refused to help Canada get to the bottom of the Arar debacle.

In November, 2001, a suspect named Ahmad El-Maati, a former mujahedeen fighter in Afghanistan who worked as a Toronto truck driver, was arrested flying into Damascus. The truck driver has publicly alleged he was tortured into falsely confessing to a Canadian bomb plot during the two years he was held in the Middle East.

Mr. El-Maati has also released a chronology that has received less attention, asserting he falsely placed Mr. Arar in Afghanistan – a year before the latter was forced into making a similar confession while jailed in Syria.

Within a few weeks, the RCMP was searching residences and trying to arrange interviews. Mountains of documents were sifted through, but no charges were ever laid in Canada.

And Mr. Arar, who was only sought as a possible witness to testify against others, was in Tunisia the day of the searches.

After the RCMP contacted him, he consented to an interview – but only under terms stipulated by his lawyer. In the fall of 2002, the telecommunications engineer was arrested in the United States.

Citing his connections to Mr. El-Maati and Mr. Almalki, U.S. officials sent him to Syria where he was held for nearly a year. Mr. Arar was awarded \$10-million in a settlement with the Canadian government earlier this year. The related cases are now under review.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM:freedom of information; inquiries; civil rights; human rights; justice; terrorism; suspects

PERSONAL NAME: Maher Arar; Dennis O'Connor

# Water system en route to Afghanistan; Central Saanich firm and Calgary company get NATO contract

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**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Business  
**PAGE:** C8 / FRONT  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Darren Stone, Times Colonist / Tom Goldbach of Specific Mechanical checks out the water treatment plant that is being transported to Afghanistan. ;  
**BYLINE:** Carla Wilson  
**SOURCE:** Times Colonist  
**WORD COUNT:** 439

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International troops returning to the scorching Kandahar air base will soon be quenching their thirst with fresh, clean water treated in a massive industrial-strength, stainless-steel system built in Greater Victoria.

The 18-tonne plant was designed by Calgary's FilterBoxx Packaged Water Treatment Solutions and produced by Specific Mechanical Systems in Central Saanich. It was scheduled to leave late yesterday on its journey to Afghanistan, where it will go into service late next month.

Staff at both companies have been busy putting together the \$1-million-plus contract, awarded by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and managed by Atco Frontec, in just over a month. The "final push" was on last week, said Tom Goldbach, engineering supervisor at Specific Mechanical, which has about 50 employees.

Winning this contract gives FilterBoxx a chance to illustrate to the military it can produce industrial-grade, reliable systems, Troy Lupul, company president, said from Calgary yesterday. Much of the company's work is for Canada's oil patch.

"You don't get too many jobs to show your international ability and I'm really proud of the fact that we as Canadians can go out and showcase how good we really are," Lupul said.

The "very heavy-duty" water-treatment system will be installed in a day and attached to a reservoir. From there, water will run through 25-centimetre pipes. The water-treatment plant was designed to be set up on a skid or mobile foundation.

Two wells supply water to the system, which can filter a million gallons a day to supply international security forces, Lupul said. Water in that area of Afghanistan is now supplied by several small treatment plants in different areas, he said.

It's not uncommon to find that water in the war-torn country is contaminated with diesel fuel.

A series of filters eliminates sand and grit, hydrocarbons and bacteria. Ultra-violet light further disinfects the water and chlorine is added for extra protection, he said.

This is the second water-treatment plant FilterBoxx has supplied to Afghanistan.

Water system en route to Afghanistan; Central Saanich firm and Calgary company get NATO contract

In 2003, a six-tonne system was delivered to Kabul. Currently the largest water treatment plant in the country, it was also put together in conjunction with Specific Mechanical Systems, Lupul said.

On trips to Afghanistan, Lupul has seen first-hand what clean water means to exhausted, dust-covered troops. They guzzle water after returning from duty and sometimes use their water bottles to spray themselves for relief from the heat. The average daily maximum temperature at Kandahar in August is 34, with zero precipitation.

"They work pretty hard over there. They have to be completely hydrated because of the temperatures."

FilterBoxx, with annual gross revenues of \$12 million, and Specific Mechanical have been working together for about six years and have co-operated on about 400 projects, Lupul said. "We are doing some really high-tech things for the oil and gas sector and building it all in Victoria — 100 per cent."

# Taliban offer to exchange women held as hostages

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
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**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A10  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, Afghanistan  
**SOURCE:** Agence France–Presse  
**WORD COUNT:** 306

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KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AFP) —The Taliban yesterday offered to swap women among their 21 South Korean hostages for female Afghan prisoners held on U.S. military bases in Afghanistan.

The Islamist militia's latest proposal on the hostages, who have been held since mid-July, came a day after Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U.S. President George W. Bush vowed not to cut any deal to secure their release.

"If the Afghan government or the Americans agree to free any Afghan women they've jailed in [military bases in] Kandahar or Bagram, we'll free the same number of female hostages," Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi told AFP.

"We're ready for such a deal. We don't know how many women are in Bagram and Kandahar," he said by phone from an unknown location.

The Afghan government said it was unaware of female prisoners with Taliban links, and a spokeswoman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force said it was not known if there were women held on those bases.

The South Koreans, 16 of them women, are believed to be held in southern Ghazni province, where they were kidnapped on July 19. Two male hostages have already been killed.

The latest proposal appeared to be aimed at kick-starting negotiations on the fate of the hostages, which had stalled ahead of Karzai's visit to the United States.

The Afghan leader has consistently refused to meet Taliban demands in return for the liberty of the hostages, having faced fierce criticism for an earlier deal on an Italian hostage that critics said encouraged further kidnappings.

Ahmadi, the Taliban spokesman, reiterated a murder threat against the Christian aid workers.

Meanwhile, fresh battles in insurgency-plagued Afghanistan yesterday left 35 Taliban fighters and six police officers dead, officials said.

U.S.-led coalition forces killed more than 20 insurgents when they repelled a rare frontal attack on a U.S. military base, the coalition said in a statement.

Afghan army and coalition forces beat back the morning attack on Firebase Anaconda, in Uruzgan province,



in which the rebels used small arms, rocket-propelled grenades and 107mm rockets, the statement said.

# Why are we so afraid of offending Muslims?

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**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun  
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**EDITION:** Final  
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**PAGE:** A11  
**COLUMN:** Christopher Hitchens  
**KEYWORDS:** RELIGION; ETHNIC GROUPS;  
TERRORISM  
**BYLINE:** Christopher Hitchens  
**SOURCE:** Special to the Sun  
**WORD COUNT:** 959

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Two weeks ago, the website On Faith (<http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/>) gave itself over to a discussion about the religion of Islam.

As usual in such cases, the search for "moderate" versions of this faith was under way before the true argument had even begun. If I were a Muslim myself, I think that this search would be the most "offensive" part of the business. Why must I prove that my deepest belief is compatible with moderation?

Unless I am wrong, a sincere Muslim need only affirm that there is one god, and only one, and that the Prophet Mohammed was his messenger, bringing thereby the final words of God to humanity.

Certain practices are supposed to follow this affirmation, including a commitment to pray five times a day, a promise to pay a visit to Mecca if such a trip should be possible, fasting during Ramadan and a pious vow to give alms to the needy. The existence of djinni, or devils, is hard to disavow because it was affirmed by the prophet. An obligation of jihad is sometimes mentioned, and some quite intelligent people argue about whether "holy war" is meant to mean a personal struggle or a political one.

No real Islamic authority exists to decide this question, and those for whom the personal is highly political have recently become rather notorious.

Thus, Islamic belief, however simply or modestly it may be stated, is an extreme position to begin with.

No human being can possibly claim to know that there is a God at all, or that there are, or were, any other gods to be repudiated. And when these ontological claims have collided, as they must, with their logical limits, it is even further beyond the cognitive capacity of any person to claim without embarrassment that the lord of creation spoke his ultimate words to an unlettered merchant in seventh-century Arabia.

Those who utter such fantastic braggings, however many times a day they do so, can by definition have no idea what they are talking about. (I hasten to add that those who boast of knowing about Moses parting the Red Sea, or about a virgin with a huge tummy, are in exactly the same position.) Finally, it turns out to be impossible to determine whether jihad means more alms-giving or yet more zealous massacre of, say, Shiite Muslims.

Why, then, should we be commanded to "respect" those who insist that they alone know something that is both unknowable and un-falsifiable? Something, furthermore, that can turn in an instant into a licence for

murder and rape?

As one who has occasionally challenged Islamic propaganda in public and been told that I have thereby "insulted 1.5 billion Muslims," I can say what I suspect — that there is an unmistakable note of menace behind that claim.

No, I do not think for a moment that Mohammed took a "night journey" to Jerusalem on a winged horse. And I do not care if 10 billion people intone the contrary. Nor should I have to. But the plain fact is that the believable threat of violence undergirds the Muslim demand for "respect."

Before me is a recent report that a student at Pace University in New York City has been arrested for a hate crime in consequence of an alleged dumping of the Koran. Nothing repels me more than the burning or desecration of books, and if, for example, this was a volume from a public or university library, I would hope that its mistreatment would constitute a misdemeanor at the very least.

But if I choose to spit on a copy of the writings of Ayn Rand or Karl Marx or James Joyce, that is entirely my business. When I check into a hotel room and send my free and unsolicited copy of the Gideon Bible or the Book of Mormon spinning out of the window, I infringe no law, except perhaps the one concerning litter.

Why do we not make this distinction in the case of the Koran?

We do so simply out of fear, and because the fanatical believers in that particular holy book have proved time and again that they mean business when it comes to intimidation. Surely that should be to their discredit rather than their credit. Should not the "moderate" imams of On Faith have been asked in direct terms whether they are, or are not, negotiating with a gun on the table?

The Pace University incident becomes even more ludicrous and sinister when it is recalled that Islamists are the current leaders in the global book-burning competition. After the rumor of a Koran down the toilet at the U.S. government's Guantanamo military prison was irresponsibly spread, a mob in Afghanistan burned down an ancient library that (as President Hamid Karzai pointed out dryly) contained several ancient copies of the same book.

Not content with igniting copies of The Satanic Verses, Islamist lynch parties demanded the burning of its author as well. Many distinguished authors, Muslim and non-Muslim, are dead or in hiding because of the words they have put on pages concerning the unbelievable claims of Islam. And it is to appease such a spirit of persecution and intolerance that a student in New York City has been arrested for an expression, however vulgar, of an opinion.

This has to stop, right now. There can be no concession to sharia — the code of law based on the Koran — in the United States. When will we see someone detained, or even cautioned, for advocating the burning of books in the name of God?

The enemies of intolerance cannot be tolerant, or neutral, without inviting their own suicide. And the advocates and apologists of bigotry and censorship and suicide-assassination cannot be permitted to take shelter any longer under the umbrella of a pluralism that they openly seek to destroy.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and Slate Magazine ([www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com)), where this column originally appeared.

# Why Harper's likely to make big changes next week

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**EDITION:** Final  
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**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
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Prime Minister Stephen Harper is expected to make significant changes to his cabinet next week in the lead up to a major new agenda-setting throne speech in the fall.

The clues, though slight, are there, and they point in one direction — a bold gesture by Harper.

The gesture is needed because polling commissioned by the federal government shows the Conservatives have not succeeded in winning majority support for their priorities or overall performance in major urban centres such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, where they hold almost no seats.

Senior advisers in cabinet ministers' offices were asked at the beginning of the summer to provide recommendations for new policy directions that could be written into a throne speech or into new "mandate letters" to cabinet ministers.

Now, with all cabinet ministers ordered to Ottawa for the week of Aug. 13, it is expected there will be a major shuffle, not just tinkering, a senior government source said yesterday.

"If it was just a small shuffle of one or two people, then why would everyone be asked to be in town?" the source said.

And if you needed another clue, look to Harper's own published remarks on June 22, at the end of the spring sitting — the third sitting since his minority government took power in February last year.

The Prime Minister's Office headlined the news release as the prime minister's marking "the end of the first session of the 39th Parliament."

"That's not just some wacky headline," said another Conservative source. "That was an editing error — someone didn't catch it."

Harper wants to rearrange cabinet responsibilities before his meeting Aug. 20–21 at Montebello, Que., with U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Felipe Calderon.

The government source said it is difficult to know how big the shuffle will be because (Harper) "holds the cards so close to his chest on these."

"It seems to all revolve around O'Connor and Carol Skelton now that she has announced that she is not running again," the source said, referring to embattled National Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, and to Skelton, the minister of national revenue.

Much speculation suggests the prime minister is not out to bring in new blood to the cabinet, but to broaden the skills of ministers already within his inner circle now that the government appears to be shifting gears and looking to a longer term in power -- to October 2009, which was fixed as the date for the next election in legislation that passed in June.

But not all are willing to second-guess the boss.

"He's got some good people not in cabinet right now who would be good cabinet members," said a second senior government source. "Carol's (Skelton) department is a good one if you're coming in as your first portfolio."

"I think the team he has now has been doing a good job. Could he improve on the team by giving people with certain skill sets a different department? ... Maybe. Does he have people on the bench who are playing in the farm team that he thinks are now ready? Maybe."

In fact, speculation has it that three other cabinet ministers may not run again in the next election -- possibly providing Harper other openings.

They are International Trade Minister David Emerson (who faces re-election hurdles in his Vancouver riding after switching from the Liberals), Immigration Minister Diane Finley of Haldimand-Norfolk (who is battling thyroid disease, but doesn't yet qualify for a pension, having just been elected in 2004) and Veterans Affairs Minister Greg Thompson (who was first elected 10 years ago in his New Brunswick Southwest riding). None has publicly announced his or her intentions.

Still, despite all the predictions that O'Connor is headed for the door, three Conservative sources yesterday played down the chances that Harper would move O'Connor out of defence -- precisely because to do so would be seen as caving in to pressure to oust him.

One frankly acknowledged the government has not successfully communicated its mission in Afghanistan to Quebecers, but said the problem is not just O'Connor's poor French; it's the lack of support from his other ministerial colleagues.

"I think in Quebec we could do more, and we should and we will," said the insider. "His colleagues who can speak French must do more."

But if Harper does move to replace O'Connor, the two people considered possible replacements are Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and Industry Minister Maxime Bernier, in part because they speak French.

Finally, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, once seen as among the cabinet's most sure-footed performers, has stumbled significantly in the past five months, said a Conservative source, citing Flaherty's backtrack on a March budget measure to eliminate a tax break for corporations investing abroad. The business community condemned the move as destructive and badly conceived, and the source said the prime minister's office was irritated by Bay Street's unanticipated reaction.

As well, Flaherty's plan to smooth over long-standing revenue-sharing disputes with the provinces left the Conservatives in a nasty showdown with the premiers of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

All that followed a storm of criticism that hit the Conservative government after Flaherty convinced Harper to

crack down on income trusts last fall.

Nonetheless, there is no sense around the finance department yet of an impending move to shift Flaherty out of the high-profile portfolio. Doing so might be seen as an admission that Harper's and Flaherty's surprise decision to tax income trusts was a major mistake, a perception the prime minister would not want to encourage.

Flaherty, who has been in Australia for meetings and a few days of down time, is expected back in Ottawa by next Monday—in time for a shuffle.

The last Conservative cabinet shuffle was in January.

Who could move where in cabinet shuffle

\* Only three people are believed to really know what Stephen Harper might do: Harper himself, chief of staff Ian Brodie and senior adviser Bruce Carson. And they're not saying. Here's the parlour talk in Ottawa: \* Gordon O'Connor (Defence): Could be shuffled to veterans affairs if Greg Thompson doesn't run again. \* Maxime Bernier (Industry): Quebecer hasn't shone, but still could move to defence at time when Van Doos are deployed to Afghanistan. \* Jim Flaherty (Finance): Good public performer, but has had rough ride recently. Interested in industry portfolio last year, could get his wish this year. \* Jim Prentice (Indian Affairs): Strong performer, trusted by PM, could become finance minister. \* Stockwell Day (Public Safety): Has stayed on message in RCMP crisis. Could move to defence or Treasury Board. \* Vic Toews (Treasury Board): Former Manitoba attorney general could help in public safety, revising Anti-Terror Act and security-certificate rules. \* Bev Oda (Heritage): Weak player could lose job to stronger junior, like Jason Kenney. \* John Baird (Environment): Likely to stay in portfolio that Canadians count as a top priority. \* Peter MacKay (Foreign Affairs): Probably won't move.

# Our troops are making a difference: commander

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**SECTION:** Canada/World  
**PAGE:** A6  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Ian Jackson, the Canadian Photo / Major General Tim Grant and his wife Sharon leave Edmonton airport. ;  
**DATELINE:** EDMONTON  
**BYLINE:** Bob Weber  
**SOURCE:** The Canadian Press  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 393

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Canada's soldiers in Afghanistan are making real, measurable improvements in the lives of people in Kandahar province, says the former commander of those troops.

And while the Taliban are likely to continue harassing both soldiers and civilians with "terrorist tactics," Major General Tim Grant believes Afghan security forces have made significant strides toward looking after themselves.

"We went from last year, when there was drought and people were starving, to this year, where it's bumper crops and people are moving back into their homes and really getting on with their lives," said Grant, who returned to Edmonton yesterday after handing off his command.

"Across the board, I think it's a success story."

Grant said the development side of Canada's mission has begun to show results in virtually every district of the Kandahar region. Statistics compiled by the military indicate that more than 1,100 wells, 75 kilometres of irrigation canals, 120 kilometres of rural roads and seven kilometres of power lines have been completed.

More than 350,000 children have been vaccinated against polio and infant mortality is dropping.

"(The programs) are working," Grant said. "There's huge traction."

Relative stability brought on by last summer's heavy fighting — along with the end to Kandahar's crippling five-year drought — has made all the difference to the region's agricultural economy, Grant said.

"Kandahar used to supply produce for most of that part of the world and they're starting to get back on their feet now and it's really great to see."

Afghan security forces have also come a long way.

When Grant arrived in the country nine months ago, the Afghan National Army had only a few hundred trained and equipped soldiers. They were only capable of working in groups of between 10 and 15 men. The army now has three trained battalions and plans and executes its own large-scale operations against the Taliban.

Grant acknowledged the police — corrupt, poorly trained and ill-equipped — remain a challenge. Even there, however, he sees small signs of progress, such as the recent appointment of a new chief of police in Kandahar.

"The day I left, he announced that he had arrested four police officers that had been taking bribes. It's small steps but it's all heading in the right direction. The most important things we're working on right now is the development of the police."

Grant said the recently arrived Quebec-based Van Doos are likely to face the same threat that caused all of Canada's most recent casualties — improvised explosive devices, or roadside bombs.

"The Taliban have truly resorted to terrorist tactics, whether it's suicide bombers or roadside bombs. Lots of kids are killed by the Taliban."



# An agenda on hold

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**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Opinion  
**PAGE:** A16  
**BYLINE:** Red Deer Advocate (Alberta)  
**SOURCE:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 484

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The best hope for western barley farmers who want to run their businesses like any other entrepreneurs is a quick federal election and a majority Conservative government. Right now, neither seem imminent.

There were such hopes when Stephen Harper became prime minister in January 2006, promising — among many other things — to unshackle barley farmers from the constraints of the Canadian Wheat Board.

After conducting a vote to let barley farmers express their views, federal Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl won a mandate. More than 62 per cent of registered farmers wanted the Canadian Wheat Board to drop its monopoly on export sales or get out of the business completely.

Many Prairie farmers have long argued that they take on the risks and costs to grow grain on their own land and deserve the right to export it directly, rather than be obliged to sell to the wheat board. They want the same rights that farmers east of Manitoba have long enjoyed.

Opponents of the Conservative plan, led from within the wheat board itself, argued that if the government wanted to make this change, it could not do so by simply altering regulations; they have to pass a law.

Last week a federal court agreed, and ruled that Parliament must approve a bill before that kind of change can take place.

"It's a victory for farmers," said Ian McCreary, a Saskatchewan farmer who is a director of the wheat board. Not for the 62 per cent of those farmers who voted to scuttle that monopoly.

Minister Strahl is mulling his options. A court appeal is possible but that won't be quick and he may lose. The simplest solution is to introduce a bill in Parliament to change the law. Simple to introduce but not easy to implement. The Tories have 125 MPs in the 308-seat House of Commons. To get a bill through, Strahl needs the support of another party.

The Liberals certainly won't support him. Neither will the federal New Democratic Party. Support for the wheat board is strongest in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and NDP governments in both provinces have been long-standing board backers.

The best hope for entrepreneurial Prairie farmers is a federal election leading to a majority Conservative government. That election may come sooner rather than later. Harper's Conservatives have been in power for 18 months and minority governments rarely last much longer.

The polls are not favourable for the Tories right now, dragged down by environmental policies that most Canadians find wanting and an unpopular war in Afghanistan. An Ipsos-Reid poll released last week pegged Conservative support nationally at 34 per cent, two points below their tally in the January 2006 election.

On the positive side for the Tories, support for sovereignty in Quebec is at a low ebb and new Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has underwhelmed not only Canadians, but many staunch Liberals.

Harper will engineer an election when he sees issues and polls turning in his favour. Regrettably for patient Prairie barley farmers, it won't happen in time to help much with this year's crop.

# Hopeful signs Pakistan can avoid civil war; There is much fear of Islamist takeover in the unstable, troubled country

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**PAGE:** A17  
**COLUMN:** National Affairs  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Hamilton Spectator File Photos / Benazir Bhutto; Photo: Hamilton Spectator File Photos / General Pervez Musharraf ;  
**BYLINE:** Gwynne Dyer  
**SOURCE:** Independent  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 898

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"There's going to be a civil war." You heard it all the time in the old Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s. People fretted about it constantly in South Africa in 1994. They have been worrying about it in Lebanon for the past year. Now they're predicting it for Pakistan — but nine times out of 10, the forecast is false.

The Soviet Union broke up with remarkably little violence, although there were some nasty little wars in various non-Russian republics down south. Apartheid's end in South Africa was astonishingly non-violent, given all that had gone before. There was a ghastly civil war in Lebanon in the late 1970s and '80s, but the odds are better than even that there will not be another. And there probably won't be a disaster in Pakistan either.

"We are very scared," Senator Enver Baig of the opposition Pakistan People's Party told the British Guardian newspaper last week. "If we don't mend our ways, it could spell the end of the country. The Islamists have sleeper cells in every city. We could have a civil war."

And if the "Islamists" won that civil war, then people with a world-view not dissimilar to Osama bin Laden's would control a country with 165 million people, an army of 600,000 men, and an estimated 50 nuclear weapons.

But the civil war hasn't happened yet, and it may never come to that. In fact, there are as many hopeful signs as frightening ones in the current turmoil in Pakistan, although it is getting hard to read the tea leaves.

Pakistan is certainly becoming unstable. The government has effectively lost control in the tribal belt along the frontier with Afghanistan, which is increasingly dominated by pro-Taliban militants. The week-long siege of radical Islamists holed up in the Red Mosque in Islamabad, the capital, in mid-July culminated in the deaths of more than 100 militants and soldiers.

The dictator who has ruled Pakistan since 1999, General Pervez Musharraf, is a living incarnation of the phrase "one-bullet regime": He has already survived four assassination attempts. More than 200 Pakistani soldiers and civilians have died in terrorist attacks since the Red Mosque incident, and alarmists are predicting

civil war and Islamist takeover.

On the other hand, there is a thriving free press in Pakistan, including (at last) independent television stations that actually report the news. The economy has been growing fast in recent years, and at least a bit of the new prosperity is trickling down to the impoverished majority.

Musharraf is the fourth general to seize power in Pakistan's 60-year history, but the country always returns to civilian rule in the end. And late last month, Pakistan's supreme court, in an act of defiance against military rule, threw out Musharraf's accusations of corruption against the chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

The charges were fabricated to ensure that the chief justice did not interfere with the general's plans for another five-year presidential term. (He planned to have himself reappointed by the very same national and regional assemblies, chosen in rigged elections in 2002, that obediently voted to appoint him five years ago — without any new election to renew their membership.) What actually happened, however, was that the charges turned Chaudhry into a national hero and a focus for resistance to the continuation of thinly disguised military rule.

There is a good chance that this crisis could end in a restoration of civilian democracy in Pakistan: that is how all three previous bouts of military rule ended. The fanatics and the extremists dominate the sparsely populated areas along the Afghan frontier because the population there is identical to the Pashtuns across the border who are the main base of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and they have been radicalized by 28 years of foreign occupation and civil war in that country.

But the vast majority of Pakistanis live down in the flat, fertile lands along the rivers, and what they want is not martyrdom but peace, justice and prosperity.

They stand a better chance of getting those things if democracy returns, even if previous intervals of democracy in Pakistan have usually ended in massive corruption and paralysis as the political class fought over the spoils. Musharraf is probably on the way out unless he declares martial law under the pretext of fighting Islamists — and it is not certain the army would follow him.

So he is trying for fake democratization. Twice, in January and again last month, he has met secretly in Abu Dhabi with Benazir Bhutto, the exiled head of the largest opposition party, trying to make a deal that would let her return as prime minister (for the third time), but leave him as president. That would be a big mistake on Bhutto's part, but it wouldn't be the first.

Despite the highly publicized violence in Pakistan, there is little chance that it will fall under Taliban-style rule. There is perhaps a one-in-three probability that Musharraf will cut a deal with Bhutto that leaves him in power for a while, but that wouldn't really end the crisis. And the odds on a return to real democracy within the year are probably better than even.

It would be nice if Pakistan's fractious and venal politicians could make it work this time.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *The Mess They Made: The Middle East After Iraq*.

# Afghan villagers see broken vows z Civilians lambasting Canadian soldiersz Complain poverty, not Taliban, the problem

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**PUBLICATION:** WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**PAGE:** A9

**SECTION:** World Wire

**WORD COUNT:** 402

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CP Wire Martin Ouellet SHAWALI KOT, Afghanistan -- Canadian soldiers found no weapons or Taliban during a recent foray into a region considered an insurgent stronghold, but they did get an earful from villagers who accused them of failing to keep their promises.

"Canadians have come here three times before and promised (to give us a well) but they've done nothing," said Haji Noor Mohammad, a leader in the desolate, poverty-stricken district of Shawali Kot.

The five-day sortie by members of the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment ended Tuesday with the soldiers having heard little from the villagers about the Taliban but plenty of griping about the "broken promises" of Canadians and Americans.

Everywhere they went, the Canadians were asked about the digging of new wells and the building of schools and mosques, while the Americans were criticized in one village for not building a school that was allegedly promised five years ago.

Discussing the Taliban was not uppermost on the minds of the villagers.

"Are the Taliban giving you problems?" Canadian Forces Capt. Stephane Girard asked Salim Ahmad, the leader of a village of about 100 people.

Ahmad's response, translated by an interpreter, was unequivocal: "There is no problem with the Taliban here." He then went on to tell a visibly perplexed Girard that the Taliban have never been seen in the village.

Many of the locals kept their harshest words for the Afghan National Police.

"The police come here after the harvest and extort money from farmers," said Ahmad, echoing comments made in a neighbouring village.

The Afghan National Police is generally acknowledged as a poorly paid force seriously lacking both training and discipline. The RCMP are one of the international forces involved in providing the ANP with training under the Provincial Reconstruction Team effort.

Canadian Warrant Officer Hani Massouh said the best the Canadian military can do is to help the Afghan police become more professional and effective.

The Canadians are in touch with high-ranking officials of the ANP, whose members and command posts are increasingly becoming targets of Taliban insurgents.

Afghan villagers see broken vows z Civilians lambasting Canadian soldiersz Complain poverty, not Taliban,

Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, Canada's new military commander in Afghanistan, said recently the international community needs to work harder to make sure the Afghan police force is honest and respected.

Canada has about 2,500 troops in Afghanistan.

The Canadians are part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, whose mandate is to help establish the authority of the Afghan government across the arid country.

Parts of Afghanistan, especially in the south where the Canadians operate, are still under the influence of the Taliban movement that offered refuge to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida organization when it was in power.

After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, a U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban from Kabul.

— Canadian Press

Afghan villagers see broken vows z Civilians lambasting Canadian soldiersz Complain poverty, no Taliban,

# Drifting toward irrelevance

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**IDNUMBER** 200708080027

**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion

**PAGE:** A7

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Reuters / ON GUARD: Canadian soldiers of India Company move through fields after a firefight with Taliban insurgents last month in Sangsar, southern Afghanistan. The federal government has been hinting about reducing the military's combat role in the war-ravaged country. ;

**BYLINE:** Col. (Ret'd) Roger Cunningham

**SOURCE:** Windsor Star

**WORD COUNT:** 463

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When are we leaving Afghanistan? Recent news stories quote our prime minister's remarks which seem to suggest he has changed his stance and is willing to pull out in 2009. The defence minister, an old soldier himself, appears to be hinting that we will be dropping the combat role.

Gen. Hillier says there is a long road ahead but has not stated that our forces will continue the fight. Andre Pratte, writing for La Presse recently reviewed the situation and suggested that Canada can withdraw from combat operations, but must accept our standing in the world we live in will diminish to where we are almost irrelevant.

I have a great reluctance to accept that Canada will go the way Pratte suggests, but he makes a powerful argument. I grew up proud of the role we have played in world affairs, including wars. We have been able to hold our heads high, as other nations respected us for the part we played on the world stage. As an example, the Dutch still regard us as their liberators and any Canadian visiting their country can expect to be made welcome.

If things go as some forecast we will no longer enjoy a place in the sun, or maybe that's exactly what we will experience.

We will sit in our rocking chairs on the deck as we reminisce about the "good old days" when we could be counted on to defend and fight for the ideals we thought were worth the sacrifices we made.

Are we, in fact, willing to see those lives wasted, the lives of our young people who had "the right stuff," and who we sent forth to fight for values we professed to hold sacred?

Can we explain to their families that the goal we reached for was illusory and not worth the price we were paying?

Are we about to back out on the obligation we seemed to have accepted?

When Canada was in the process of earning its reputation as a responsible and dependable ally, I do not recall our having a concern about the cost.

Our friends needed us and we responded to that need.

We stood firm and we gave willingly of our resources, of our future, as we marched to the battle lines, in the air, on the land and on the sea. The youth of this great country were thrust into the front lines and they responded in a manner to make us proud, and which won the admiration of the world.

Surely the country that broke from the ranks of being seen as part of the British effort at Vimy Ridge, and other sites, will not drop back to the level of "being among those who were there."

Surely we will not turn to making appearances on the world stage only when safety is assured.

Surely we will not retreat into isolationism, turning our backs on the reputation we have of being there for our friends and for those who needed our brand of help.

If we do, then we will have become less than the proud people we have been. We will have become a people who should walk the earth with heads bowed in humiliation.

COL. (Ret'd) ROGER CUNNINGHAM

Windsor



# Perogy Cat comic gets war zone assignment; Victoria artist sending 2,000 copies of his comic book to troops in Afghanistan

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**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Arts

**PAGE:** F2

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Bruce Stotesbury, The Victoria Times Colonist /Artist Gareth Gaudin joins a display of his comic book, The Perogy Cat for the Troops, as he prepares to ship 2,000 copies from his Victoria store to entertain Canadian Forces members in Afghanistan. ;

**BYLINE:** Leah Collins

**SOURCE:** The Victoria Times Colonist

**WORD COUNT:** 853

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A Perogy Cat doesn't look much like Bob Hope. Or Marilyn Monroe, for that matter. But the doughy, wide-eyed cartoon kitten that resembles, well, a perogy, is embarking on his own USO-style tour. And he's got orders to ship out from his creator, Victoria artist Gareth Gaudin.

Gaudin has published a comic book especially for the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan called The Perogy Cat for the Troops. He sent 2,000 copies to Afghanistan where he hopes they'll "spread like gossip."

The character might not have the same international cachet as other cartoon cats; you won't find one in your Happy Meal, it doesn't hate Mondays. But since appearing in Gaudin's self-published comic, Magic Teeth Dailies, the character has found a cult following. It has its own Facebook group, it has appeared (indirectly) on national TV and at least 11 people (that Gaudin knows of) have its pillowy likeness tattooed on their bodies.

It's also easily spotted in downtown Victoria in Gaudin's comic shop, Legends.

Perogy Cat has certainly marked his territory throughout the shop. He peeps out from the picture window in paintings and Sharpie sketches. There's even a stuffed doll prowling among the graphic novels on display. One painting hangs over the till with the proud tag: "as seen on Letterman."

No joke. Ed Robertson from the Barenaked Ladies sported a Perogy Cat button on the show. He has been a fan since Gaudin traded some issues of Magic Teeth for tickets to BNL's Victoria show.

Gaudin says demand from passersby, intrigued by the cute kitty in the shop window, led him to compile a family-friendly Perogy Cat comic this spring, made up of the character's appearances in Magic Teeth. He knows he's entertaining readers, and that's enough for him.

So why not reach readers who could use the entertainment more than most?

He credits his wife for suggesting the project. (Coincidentally, she also inspired the character. While taking the same class at university, he hoped to catch her eye with some cute cartoons.) The two were reminiscing about the re-runs of Bob Hope USO shows they had watched while growing up in the '70s. A Perogy Cat

Perogy Cat comic gets war zone assignment; Victoria artist sending 2,000 copies of his comic book to troops

comic, they figured, could be just as amusing as old Bob whacking golf balls in the dunes.

And Gaudin had a hunch the troops would appreciate it. Taking a seat on stacks of comic catalogues, two years worth of his own comic covers peeking out from the rack behind him, Gaudin tries to recall how many subscribers he gets in his shop. He figures it's 200 overall. More than a quarter of those, he says, are in the army and navy.

He half-jokes that a few of them will pass through the shop in the next 10 minutes. Many, he hasn't seen in months. "The people who've mysteriously gone missing are probably still there (in Afghanistan)," he says.

"Knowing these guys who are all happy-go-lucky, cool guys that come in the store, and these are friends of mine. And it's hard to think they're in the desert bored out of their minds. That's a job I don't envy. What I can do is send some comics," he says.

About a month ago, he started asking his military customers if they thought it was a good idea.

Leading Seaman Jason Aucoin was one of those guys. His emphatic response: "Oh, yeah."

Aucoin regularly brings a stack of comics with him when at sea, including Gaudin's titles. "You don't get a lot of time to yourself. If you can climb in with a book and escape from everything else, it's a nice little vacation, even if it's only for 20 or 30 minutes," he said.

Gaudin's printer, South Island Print Services in Sidney, B.C., was also impressed by the idea. They agreed to make up the order, gratis.

As for the content, it's a compilation of previously run Magic Teeth comic strips. The naughty bits he couldn't include in this spring's Perogy Cat collection made the cut, as did a few surreal strips involving the cat and a tank (included for some light military flavour). Gaudin had plenty of material to choose from. He writes a comic a day, and hit the three-year mark July 27.

Civilians can't get their hands on a copy, but Gaudin is keeping a few issues at his shop for Armed Forces customers in town.

It's the first time in Sandra Pinard's memory that anyone has shipped comic books to Afghanistan. Pinard is the deployment co-ordinator at the Military Family Resource Centre in Victoria. Her organization doesn't normally ship gifts from people without a relative serving overseas, but when Gaudin approached her with his idea, she decided to make an exception.

"I thought it was great. Unique, as well ... They love things to read, things that are quick. We couldn't send Harry Potter, for instance," she says with a chuckle. "A comic, though, they can lose themselves for five or 10 minutes and go back."

"I get a lot of their e-mails, and they're very appreciative of what's sent. Even if it's a Reader's Digest that's a month old, they just love to get things to read from home."

In the meantime, Gaudin will wait to find out how Perogy Cat is welcomed in Afghanistan. The comics should reach the country within the next four to six weeks, where they'll be taken to Canada House.

"I would like it distributed like a propaganda bomb," says Gaudin. "Drop them here and there. As long as I entertain."

# The risks of hubris

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**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
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**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**WORD COUNT:** 253

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Leaders of countries at war always face the dilemma of what to say about the progress of the campaign.

It is important to show confidence in the eventual successful outcome of the campaign, to keep the nation rallied behind such an important cause. Winston Churchill was the master of getting this just right.

But if that stated confidence is misplaced, exaggerated, or outright wrong, when the truth is revealed, the results can be politically devastating for the leader and shocking for his countrymen and countrywomen.

President George W. Bush is still dealing with the consequences of the hubris that accompanied his public relations gesture on a U.S. aircraft carrier when he basically declared the Iraq war won. Four years later the U.S. casualty toll is climbing and Mr. Bush's popularity is plummeting.

Now Hamid Karzai, the leader of troubled Afghanistan, boldly says that the Taliban are a "defeated" force in his country. This is the same Taliban that is increasing its activities across the country, even within Kabul, the capital, the one place where Mr. Karzai's government was supposed to hold sway.

We all should have sympathy for Mr. Karzai. He leads a country which has not known peace for decades, where tribal rivalries almost always are settled by combat. And there are clear successes in the campaign to rebuild his country. But he risks much, for himself, his government and his people, when he declares his enemy defeated when it clearly isn't.

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# S. Korean missions pull back; Hostage affair chills Christian preaching

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**PAGE:** A9  
**DATELINE:** SEOUL  
**SOURCE:** Reuters  
**WORD COUNT:** 222

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SEOUL – Christian groups in South Korea, the biggest supplier of missionaries to the world after the United States, are scaling back operations in trouble spots after the hostage crisis in Afghanistan.

The kidnapping of 23 Korean church volunteers by Taliban insurgents more than two weeks ago has sparked charges that some Christians are putting proselytizing before common sense.

The kidnappers have already killed two of their hostages and are threatening to kill more unless the Afghan government releases Taliban prisoners in exchange -- which Kabul authorities have refused to do.

"Our church had about 10 people in Afghanistan," a missionary with one major church in Seoul said. "Most of them are back."

He requested that neither he nor his church be identified because of the sensitivity of the continuing hostage crisis and the "very harsh" criticism at home of missionary work.

An official with another Seoul church, which has focused its missionary work in a number of troubled regions, said its missionaries in Afghanistan would be recalled under a new government guideline that bans all travel to the country.

South Korea has now listed Afghanistan, with Somalia and Iraq, as countries where travel, except for official purposes, is a punishable offence.

Missionary groups said they were scaling back short-term programs, which usually peak in the summer, in conflict zones.

There are about 17,000 South Korean Christian missionaries abroad, according to official statistics, but an official with one national mission federation said the actual number was much bigger.

# Obama got it right

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**PUBLICATION:** National Post  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** National  
**SECTION:** Issues & Ideas  
**PAGE:** A15  
**BYLINE:** Michael Ross  
**SOURCE:** National Post  
**WORD COUNT:** 755

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It's not every day that a leading Democratic presidential nominee talks like a post-9/11 neo-con Republican. But that's exactly what Barack Obama sounded like in a recent speech calling for unilateral action to hunt down al-Qaeda in Pakistan — with or without Pakistani permission.

Many pundits —including the Post's own Colby Cosh — have condemned Obama for reckless sabre-rattling. But Obama is right. Whether or not he becomes president, we should be thanking him for finally talking about the elephant in the room that everyone else seems determined to ignore.

Since 9/11, the West has been combating al-Qaeda and its affiliated transnational terrorist confederates in Afghanistan, Iraq, southeast Asia and the horn of Africa. And yet very little has been done at al-Qaeda's organizational epicentre in Pakistan's northwestern tribal badlands, where the group's leaders are allowed to operate in relative security. Every time that Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, release their taped messages for the world's media outlets, it becomes readily apparent that neither man is living in a cave, unwashed, starved and on the run. They look well-fed, relaxed and in control of their environment. They also have access to studio-grade production equipment and advanced communication facilities. All this should tell us something about how reliable Pakistan has become as a partner in the war on terror.

True, Pakistan's military leader, Pervez Musharraf, walks a tightrope between maintaining a relatively stable pro-Western government and provoking his country's Islamists. But in recent years, his own government apparatus actually has become part of the problem: Extremists within his intelligence service, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), are helping the country's Islamists expand their fiefdoms.

The ties between terrorist groups and Pakistan's ISI date back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The subsequent U.S.-backed insurgency against Moscow's puppet government in Kabul put Pakistan on the front line of the Cold War. It was during this period that Pakistan's ISI, supported by Washington, provided weapons and

training to the Afghan mujahedeen. It was from the ranks of these same mujahedeen that al-Qaeda's leadership emerged to attack the jihadis' original Western sponsors.

After the Soviets left in 1989, senior elements in Pakistan's ISI maintained their close relationship with Afghan-based mujahedeen. In 1998, for instance, when the United States hit al-Qaeda training camps in retaliation for the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, several ISI members were among those killed. None other than Lieutenant General Mahmoud Ahmad, the ISI's head until October, 2001, was himself an al-Qaeda confederate and devoted Islamic fundamentalist at the time of the 9/11 attacks.

Whole swaths of Pakistan's "federally-administered tribal areas" are anything but federally administered, and

have been taken over by an assortment of extremist groups — such as Harakat-ul Ansar, Al Umar, Al Barq, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Toiba— seeking to wage jihad. If Canadians and other NATO soldiers are being killed in Afghanistan at the hands of the Taliban, it is because the Taliban are allowed to train and equip themselves in Pakistan.

While I am not advocating a full-scale invasion of Pakistan, I do not think it is controversial to suggest — as Obama has — that Western nations should feel free to collect intelligence and conduct targeted military operations in Pakistan's wild west without first asking permission. If Pakistan won't police these areas, somebody has to.

Moreover, it is not as if the West hasn't tried "soft power" to solve this problem. Western intelligence services, and in particular the Central Intelligence Agency, have been trying valiantly to bring Pakistan's ISI into the fold for years. This would be a case of military action being used as a last resort.

The best case scenario, of course, would be if Pakistan reined in al-Qaeda on its own initiative. Perhaps Obama's musings might provide Musharraf with a little prodding in that regard, especially if other candidates from both Democratic and Republican ranks said the same thing. The unanimous message must be that if Pakistan's leader doesn't clean out the ISI and become a serious partner in the long war on terror, Western soldiers, spies and pilots will do the job themselves.

—Michael Ross is a former Israeli combat engineer and Mossad agent, now living in British Columbia. A memoir of his service to Israel, *The Volunteer*, was published in April by McClelland & Stewart.

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**KEYWORDS:** TERRORISM; FOREIGN RELATIONS; ARMAMENTS

# Taliban offer women in hostage swap; Karzai and Bush vowed: No deals

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A15  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: HA TAE-HWANG AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES / Relatives of South Korean hostages in Afghanistan hold papers in front of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Seoul yesterday calling for help to save 21 Taliban-held hostages. ;  
**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM; FOREIGN AID; BOMBINGS; NOBEL PRIZE; AFGHANISTAN  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, Afghanistan  
**SOURCE:** AFP  
**WORD COUNT:** 163

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The Taliban yesterday offered to swap women among their 21 South Korean hostages for female Afghan prisoners held on U.S. military bases in Afghanistan.

The Islamist militia's latest proposal on the hostages, who have been held since mid-July, came one day after Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U.S. President George W. Bush vowed not to cut any deal to secure their release.

"If the Afghan government or the Americans agree to free any Afghan women they've jailed in (military bases in) Kandahar or Bagram, we'll free the same number of female hostages," a Taliban spokesperson, Yousuf Ahmadi, said. "We're ready for such a deal. We don't know how many women are in Bagram and Kandahar," he said.

The South Koreans, 16 of them women, are believed to be held in southern Ghazni province, where they were kidnapped on July 19. Two male hostages have already been killed.

Relatives of the hostages said that summit talks between Bush and Karzai had not made enough effort to save their lives.

Fresh battles left 35 Taliban fighters and six policemen dead yesterday, officials said.

# Hideouts struck

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**SECTION:** News  
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**COLUMN:** Fast Track  
**KEYWORDS:** TERRORISM;  
WAR  
**DATELINE:** MIRANSHAH  
**SOURCE:** Reuters  
**WORD COUNT:** 73

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Pakistani security forces, backed by helicopter gunships, destroyed two hideouts of pro-Taliban militants in a predawn operation near the North Waziristan border with Afghanistan yesterday, a military spokesperson said. U.S. officials have said they expect Pakistan to strike at select targets in a region where they say Al-Qa'ida has regrouped and is planning for operations elsewhere in the world.



# Soldier's relative 'disgusted' by council's decal decision; Critic would drive to Calgary from B.C. to lobby politicians

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**PUBLICATION:** Calgary Herald

**DATE:** 2007.08.08

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** City & Region

**PAGE:** B2

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Courtesy, Department of National Defence, HeraldArchive / Cpl. Jordan Anderson, above, who was killed along with five other Canadians by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan, deserves our ongoing support, says Anderson's father-in-law, Tim McGrath. ; Photo: Mayor Dave Bronconnier ;

**KEYWORDS:** MUNICIPAL TAXES

**BYLINE:** Colette Derworiz, with a file from Kim Guttormson, CalgaryHerald.

**SOURCE:** Calgary Herald

**WORD COUNT:** 603

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A relative of a soldier who died in Afghanistan last month says he would drive to Calgary from Vancouver Island to convince city council to allow Support our Troops decals on municipal vehicles.

Tim McGrath, the father-in-law of the late Cpl. Jordan Anderson, told the Herald that aldermen should reconsider last month's decision.

"I was disgusted," McGrath said from his home in Nanaimo, suggesting the least council members can do is follow the Alberta government's lead and let employees voluntarily put the decals on municipal vehicles to show support for the troops.

McGrath's son-in-law was one of six Canadian soldiers who died on July 4 when their armoured vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Kandahar province, leading to a massive explosion.

McGrath, who attended the repatriation ceremony at Ontario's CFB Trenton a couple of days later, said he was on Highway 401 after the tribute.

"Unfortunately, I had a unique perspective," he wrote in a recent e-mail to the Herald. "I passed under every bridge between CFB Trenton and downtown Toronto. I was one of the families following the funeral hearses."

On the bridges crossing over the highway, hundreds of people -- including firefighters and paramedics -- showed their support for the fallen soldiers with Canadian flags and yellow ribbons.

"The majority of Canadians do support our troops regardless of what the Calgary politicians say," he added.

Calgary city council decided in mid-July not to put yellow ribbons on municipal vehicles after Mayor Dave Bronconnier suggested the city sell the decals at city facilities and donate the money to the local Military Family Resource Centre.

Bronconnier, who's received letters supporting both sides of the issue, has said the decision doesn't mean there is a lack of support for the troops.

"The difference is council has said the way to show support is not by putting a decal on a dump truck," he said. "It is . . . to show support for our troops in other, tangible ways."

But McGrath said the mayor's comment about the decals not being "tangible support" makes his stomach turn.

"The purpose of the yellow ribbon is very clear. It says 'Support our Troops,' " he wrote. "These soldiers — working in 50 degree heat, loaded up with up to 90 pounds of equipment, walking up mountains, through poppy fields and doing it every day for six months — certainly deserve and get my respect.

"These young men and women see fellow soldiers, their friends and comrades die and yet they go on, day after day. These soldiers are the true heroes. Some have given the true sacrifice."

The most recent deaths, which included Anderson, were the deadliest since Easter Sunday, when six Canadian soldiers were killed in a similar roadside bombing.

Sixty-six Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan since 2002, including two from Calgary.

On Aug. 3, 2006, Pte. Kevin Dallaire and another soldier were killed in a rocket attack near Kandahar; on May 17, 2006, Capt. Nichola Goddard was killed south of the Afghan city.

Dallaire's father, Gaetan, said he can relate to McGrath's point of view, but believes it's a personal choice.

"It's just a material thing to me," he said last month. "It's whatever you hold in your mind or in your heart that counts the most."

Tim Goddard, father of Nichola, has also said it's best to allow Calgarians to make their own decisions about whether to put a decal on their vehicles.

Bronconnier said there are other ways city council is supporting soldiers — including those going to Afghanistan early next year — such as contributing money to the local Military Museum and replanting the trees along Memorial Drive.

"I understand when you have grieving families, we feel for those families," he said. "Those are our residents who are not returning home.

"We are going to honour them in a very meaningful way."

But McGrath said if the city wanted to be practical, it would reconsider the decision in September, when Ald. Ric McIver has said he'll try to bring the issue forward again.

Since the earlier motion was defeated, McIver would need 10 votes to get it on the agenda.

"My heart goes out to this individual. He's suffered an enormous loss. I would certainly bring his views forward," McIver said.

"I would ride to Calgary and argue why they should do it," McGrath said.

cderworiz@theherald.canwest.com

Soldier's relative 'disgusted' by council's decal decision; Critic would drive to Calgary from B.C. to lobby polit

# Calgary aid worker sees results, but Afghans need more help

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**IDNUMBER** 200708080067  
**PUBLICATION:** Calgary Herald  
**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
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**SECTION:** City & Region  
**PAGE:** B1 / FRONT  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Mikael Kjellström, Calgary Herald / Mary KateMacIsaac is in Calgary on a break from her three-year World Vision posting in Herat, Afghanistan. ;  
**KEYWORDS:** MUSICIANS; MUSIC  
**BYLINE:** Kelly Cryderman  
**SOURCE:** Calgary Herald  
**WORD COUNT:** 487

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During a two-week vacation away from Afghanistan, Calgarian Mary Kate MacIsaac has shed her usual work wardrobe of trousers, a tunic that covers her arms and legs, and a head scarf.

"You are very, very cautious. You don't walk down the streets laughing with your voice. You are timid and you are quiet," MacIsaac says of Afghanistan.

"You don't want to be threatening anybody with what, God only knows, our culture might represent to them."

In her hometown for a family visit and break from her three-year World Vision posting in Herat, Afghanistan, she said Canadians should be proud of the international work being done there and the price paid in lives — 66 Canadian soldiers and a diplomat have been killed.

MacIsaac speaks of one Afghan woman she met who was married off at age 12 and spent the first year after her wedding pondering suicide.

Now in her late 30s with several children, the woman was devastated when her husband sold their own 12-year-old daughter into marriage.

However, the woman has been learning to read over the past two years and now has plans for the future.

"While she is still experiencing heartfelt sorrow over the same thing happening to her daughter that happened to her, through literacy she is saying, 'I see myself becoming a teacher in a few years.' And she said, 'who knows, one day I might even run for parliament because someone has to start changing the systems that are hurting us.' "

MacIsaac said Canada needs to send more aid to the country for there to be more meaningful changes and progress.

"The military strategy isn't enough to salvage this country," said MacIsaac, 38.

"Military prowess will not win the war that's going on there."

Working as a communications manager — dealing with both local Afghans and international media — she is the only Canadian on the ground for the international Christian relief and development organization.

Much of MacIsaac's work is focused on empowering and educating girls and women, including one program that encourages school enrolment by offering food rations to poor families that send their children to school.

World Vision does not operate in some of the most violence-prone provinces, such as Helmand and Kandahar, where Canadian troops are operating. But MacIsaac said much of Canada's humanitarian and reconstruction resources in Afghanistan are aimed at those major conflict areas, when the money could be having a greater impact in more stable parts of the country.

"It leaves people saying, 'Why don't we start some poppy cultures if they're getting the funding anyways?' " said MacIsaac.

Canadian reporters, she said, also tend to focus on Canadian military operations in the south and not on what is going on in the rest of Afghanistan. "I think Canadians would be better served if they saw a bigger picture."

MacIsaac does her job as the situation on the ground remains dangerous for foreigners and Afghans alike. Twenty-three Korean church volunteers were kidnapped by Taliban insurgents more than two weeks ago, and two have been killed.

Last year, four World Vision workers in Afghanistan were killed.

MacIsaac said it's tough, dangerous work, but she is drawn to examples of hope among the personal risks, sky-high infant mortality rates and razed education system.

MacIsaac — who has degrees in journalism and theological studies — said anywhere World Vision works, members do not proselytize. The focus is relief and development.

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# Over 20 Afghan rebels die in rare attack on U.S. base

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
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**KEYWORDS:** WAR  
**DATELINE:** KABUL  
**SOURCE:** Calgary Herald  
**WORD COUNT:** 111

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U.S.-led forces backed by air support killed more than 20 Taliban militants after the rebels launched a rare frontal attack Tuesday on a U.S. military base in central Afghanistan, the coalition said.

Afghan army and U.S.-led coalition forces beat back the morning attack on U.S. Firebase Anaconda, in Uruzgan province, in which the rebels used small arms, rocket-propelled grenades and 107-millimetre rockets, a coalition statement said.

It said that as 75 fighters attacked the base, air support was called in.

"Almost two dozen insurgents were confirmed killed in the attack," it said, adding that two Afghan soldiers sustained minor injuries and were evacuated for treatment.

Four civilians, including two girls aged under 12, were also injured when they were hit by rocket-propelled grenades.

# Taliban offers all-female exchange for S. Koreans; Hostages held since mid-July

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**DATE:** 2007.08.08  
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**SECTION:** News  
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**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM; BOMBINGS  
**DATELINE:** KANDAHAR, Afghanistan  
**SOURCE:** Agence France-Presse  
**WORD COUNT:** 331

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The Taliban on Tuesday offered to swap women among their 21 South Korean hostages for female Afghan prisoners held on U.S. military bases in Afghanistan.

The Islamist militia's latest proposal on the hostages, who have been held since mid-July, came a day after Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U.S. President George W. Bush vowed not to cut any deal to secure the release of the Koreans.

"If the Afghan government or the Americans agree to free any Afghan women they've jailed in (military bases in) Kandahar or Bagram, we'll free the same number of female hostages," Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi told AFP.

"We're ready for such a deal. We don't know how many women are in Bagram and Kandahar," he said by phone from an unknown location.

The Afghan government said it was unaware of female prisoners with Taliban links, and a spokeswoman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force said it was not known if there were women held on those bases.

The South Koreans, 16 of them women, are believed to be held in southern Ghazni province, where they were kidnapped on July 19. Two male hostages have been killed.

The latest proposal appeared to be aimed at kick-starting negotiations on the fate of the hostages, which had stalled ahead of Karzai's visit to the United States.

The Afghan leader has consistently refused to meet Taliban demands in return for the liberty of the hostages, having faced fierce criticism for an earlier deal on an Italian hostage that critics said encouraged further kidnappings.

Ahmadi, the Taliban spokesman, reiterated a murder threat against the Christian aid workers.

"If Karzai and Bush don't change their position, they'll be responsible," he said.

Relatives of the hostages said that summit talks between Bush and Karzai had not made enough effort to save their lives.

Gathered at a church on the outskirts of Seoul, where the aid workers were based, they expressed their disappointment at Monday's talks, when the leaders insisted there could be no deal with the Taliban extremists.

The families, some weeping, wore paper signs reading "Send them home" and "Set them free" while a spokesman read their statement on television.

"We could not sleep at night due to our expectations, as the release and safe return of our families depended on the two leaders' summit," the statement said.

# Bribes slip reporter through Kabul airport

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**SECTION:** News  
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**COLUMN:** Don Martin  
**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM; FOREIGN AID; AFGHANISTAN  
**DATELINE:** DUBAI, United Arab Emirates  
**BYLINE:** Don Martin  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 688

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In the end, Afghan police performed as expected. They pocketed a couple more bribes to help this stranded columnist sneak through the Kabul airport without a proper exit visa while an officer resurfaced to partially justify the palm grease I slipped him a week ago.

After a final heart-stopping \$50 bill handed to an officer checking passports at the boarding ramp of yet another jet, I finally escaped Afghanistan on Tuesday after a week of involuntary confinement due to paperwork confusion.

The nagging problem was a departure stamp on my visa showing I had left the country on a date when I was actually sweating with a platoon of soldiers in the middle of Kandahar province. I had — and still have — no explanation for the stamp, so I can't really blame the authorities for being suspicious.

But the picture-perfect proof of Afghanistan security corrupted to its core was on display in the junior police officer blocking access to the diplomatic entrance at 6 a.m. Tuesday. A billboard asking visitors to report anyone taking bribes was over his head. And yet, he was full of promises and winks that left no doubt that he was seeking a salary subsidy from me as I languished for hours around the gate, watching yet another flight depart with my seat empty on a non-refundable ticket.

The way it was explained later by a U.S. army security whiz, all the 'mentors' who monitor regular officers were off protecting Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai upon his return from a meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush, which meant it was a bonanza of a payoff payday.

Even on monitored days, police corruption is a serious problem here. They are loathed more than feared and respected not a bit by the average Afghan. It's hard to blame police for being susceptible to bribes given the average cop's \$70-per-month salary, which is usually reduced as senior officers skim off a piece of the payroll on its way down the chain of command.

My little problem is but a paintbrush stroke in a much bigger picture, but when a Canadian journalist is cleared for takeoff after Canadian Ambassador Arif Lalani personally calls in favours and there's still a crooked cop blocking the exit with his hand out, one can only imagine what average Afghans encounter when they try to deal with their government.

Lalani, who I can say with openly declared bias is a top-notch ambassador with the perfect staff for any stranded Canadian to have in his corner, agrees there's a problem and sees a Canadian role in finding a



solution.

He thinks Canada should work to better train police, improve their equipment and get their pay increased — all areas under the mandate of the international security force.

But given how corruption seems both endemic and epidemic in Afghanistan, one wonders if improvement is not decades away.

Take the police captain who prevented me from catching my first flight Tuesday morning. By the afternoon, he was guiding me through the airport to passport control after pocketing a \$50 bribe.

During my involuntary stay in Kabul, many sympathizers have shared stories of palm grease being the only lubricant that works in dealing with the Karzai government.

The Canadian owner of a guest house says he has to bribe the power company to keep the lights on. He has no choice. If he was forced to depend on his generator for electricity, "my profits would disappear."

Arguably, all this is just the Afghan way. But add up all the airline tickets sacrificed, the cost of hotels and fixers during the delay, the new visa application and the bribes, and my employers paid \$4,000—plus for an improper stamp on an Afghanistan visa. That's a stiff price for a business to deal with a mistake I would argue was mostly made by government employees.

Or course, the ultimate irony of my ordeal came after the final bribe when the door finally closed on a Dubai-bound jet and I let out a sigh of relief to be free of the place forever.

I turned on my iPod, hit the shuffle button and burst into laughter to strange looks from the guy beside me. A song came on I haven't heard in years — Supertramp's Take the Long Way Home.

And what a long strange trip it's been.

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# Soldiers back home after extended tour of duty

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**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Walter Tychnowicz, Edmonton Journal / Sgt. Jeff Daley holds his daughter, four-year-old Kaelin, as he speaks to the media at the Edmonton International Airport Tuesday morning. ;

**KEYWORDS:** !@DATELINE=EDMONTON

**BYLINE:** Josh Wingrove

**SOURCE:** Edmonton Journal

**WORD COUNT:** 217

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Twelve Canadian soldiers were back at home Tuesday after nine months in Afghanistan — three months longer than the standard rotation.

Among them was recently promoted Maj.-Gen. Tim Grant, who led Canada's forces in Afghanistan from November of last year until last week.

Grant said Canada's security operations in the country are providing an umbrella for its diplomatic and development agendas — and that development efforts are working in the Kandahar district.

Canadians under Grant's command improved health care, distributed vaccines, further stabilized the volatile Panjwahi and Zharey regions, handed out more than 600 infrastructure development grants — which has led to this year's bumper crop, Grant said — and distributed more than three billion tonnes of food. The Afghan National Army has also grown in the past nine months, from 400 to nearly 3,500.

The biggest risks remaining for soldiers are makeshift roadside bombs and suicide bombers, he said.

"The Taliban have truly resorted to terrorist tactics, whether it's suicide bombers or roadside bombs. They attack indiscriminately. They don't care who they kill or injure," said Grant, who will begin a new position in Ottawa next month.

Sixty-six Canadians have died in Afghanistan since 2002, including 22 during Grant's tenure. The last casualties came on July 4, when a roadside bomb killed six soldiers, three of them from Edmonton.

Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche has replaced Grant as task force commander.