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Canada hopeful about NATO reinforcements to Afghanistan

OTTAWA (NNI): Canada said it is confident NATO would send more troops to southern Afghanistan to satisfy its conditions to keep Canadian troops there until 2011. "Regarding our discussions with our allies, they are proceeding well and we expect to meet our goals," said Sandra Buckler, spokeswoman for Prime Minister Stephen Harper, at a news briefing in Ottawa. The remarks came ahead of the April 2-4 NATO talks, which will focus on the group's Afghan mission. Harper will meet his counterparts at the meeting in Bucharest, Romania and press for more troops and equipment to strengthen the Canadian deployment, said Buckler, "we're going to take this opportunity to encourage more involvement." Canada's parliament voted earlier this month to extend its deployment in southern Afghanistan to 2011, but only under the condition that allies send 1,000 more troops and provide the 2,500 Canadian soldiers with drones and helicopters. Otherwise, Canada would withdraw at the end of its current mandate in February 2009. The United States, France and Poland have hinted they may send extra troops.

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