

Australian troops labelled 'lighthouses'

15:00 AEST Thu May 29 2008 **Australian soldiers in Afghanistan are being ridiculed for their limited role on**



Soldiers in Afghanistan are frustrated with limited role. (AAP)

By Rajeshni Naidu, ninemsn

the front with Canadian and other troops labelling them "lighthouses" because "they never go out after dark".

A Canadian source in Kandahar has told ninemsn that the Australians are being ridiculed because of their restricted night operations.

News of the label comes as military chiefs acknowledge that Australian diggers are disgruntled and frustrated because of their non-combat roles in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Canada and Britain have both had more than 90 soldiers killed in Afghanistan, whereas Australia has lost five.

Australia's infantry — a third of the army's combat forces — have not been in a frontline role since the Vietnam War, over 30 years ago.

Ninemsn's source reported that Canadian troops would rather not wear the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) NATO badge, joking that it stands for "I suck at fighting".

"Some Canadian guys won't even wear the badge. They say only those who can't leave the base wear it," the source said.

While no Australian troops have been killed in combat in Iraq, there is speculation that all 550 soldiers will soon be withdrawn from south of the country.

The soldiers have reportedly complained about being held back from heavy fighting in Baghdad.

Lieutenant General Peter Leahy defended the Army deployment policies, but said he was aware many soldiers wanted "a bit more of a go".

Earlier this week, Senior Army official Major Jim Hammett criticised the role of Australian troops in war zones in the *Australian Army Journal*.

In an article entitled "We were soldiers once", he said the infantry was trained for combat but never saw the front lines as a result of "force protection and national policies".

Major Hammett's views were supported by another officer, Captain Greg Colton, who wrote an article entitled "Second-rate operational tasks".

He claimed there was a "growing sense of frustration" among soldiers who were being kept from dangerous tasks.

