

Make it worth the risk, says Manley

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John Manley reiterated demands for at least 1,000 more NATO troops in Kandahar province, telling the Globe and Mail's editorial board the Canadian mission there is in jeopardy without more support from our allies.

"We really came to the conclusion that with the force we have now, the mission in Kandahar is in jeopardy," Mr. Manley told the editorial board Wednesday.

"There's also an element where you have to say, 'We're putting our sons and daughters at risk. They have to have a reasonable chance to succeed.' It's when you get into that element of the equation that you've got to go to NATO and say there just aren't enough troops on the ground for us to make this a successful enterprise."

Listen to Mr. Manley's opening remarks to the editorial board:  [Play audio](#)



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From left: Pamela Wallin, former Canadian consul-general in New York, former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, and Derek Burney, former Canadian ambassador to the U.S., meet with the Globe and Mail's editorial board Wednesday. (*Charla Jones/The Globe and Mail*)

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A panel led by the former Liberal cabinet minister recommended an extension to Canada's mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009 on condition NATO allies reinforce Canadian efforts in the dangerous southern part of the country with at least 1,000 more soldiers.

The panel was established last October by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to recommend a course of action in Afghanistan.

The report could be a significant bargaining chip for Canada if this country negotiates a new role in the war that has now claimed 78 Canadian lives.

However, the report's recommendations were quickly rejected by the leaders of the federal opposition parties who instead demanded a full withdrawal of troops.

Mr. Harper's staff said he wanted time to review the report carefully before offering a response.

The Conservatives have said Parliament will vote on whether to extend the mission past February of next year – a vote that Mr. Manley suggests deferring until after a NATO summit meeting in April in Bucharest so Canada has an opportunity to present its views "at the highest level."

His panel rejected all four options proposed by the Conservative government for Canadian Forces in Afghanistan because each entailed a pull-out of Canadian troops starting in February, 2009. It instead argues for an indefinite extension that would see the Canadian Forces gradually refocus on reconstruction and then withdraw as Afghans are able to do their jobs.

"We do not expect that NATO will be able to replace us in 2009, nor will the Afghans be ready to take over," Mr. Manley said at a press conference Tuesday after the release of the much-anticipated report. "But we can insist that NATO find us a partner in Kandahar, enabling us to expand the scope of security and to shift increasingly from fighting to training the Afghan forces."

Canada is the only country operating in southern Afghanistan that does not have such a partner, he said. The report, which found security in Kandahar is deteriorating despite the efforts of 2,500 members of the Canadian Forces who are stationed there, also sets the purchase of medium-lift helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles as a condition for the mission's continuation.

But Mr. Manley and the other members of the panel - Jake Epp, a former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister, Paul Tellier, a former Privy Council clerk, Derek Burney, a former Canadian ambassador to the U.S. and Pamela Wallin, a former Canadian consul-general in New York - argue that the mission should not be abandoned "prematurely."

The report took a broad swipe at the Canadian International Development Agency, saying its policy of funnelling aid through multilateral organizations and the central Afghan government is unwieldy and its staff are hampered by their unwillingness to leave the safety of the military

base. The panel urges more direct bilateral funding for specific projects.

The report also recommended a more "disciplined diplomatic position" regarding Afghanistan, including: the appointment of a UN representative; the adoption by NATO of a comprehensive military and political plan; forceful representations with Afghanistan's neighbours to improve security; and concerted efforts to tackle Afghan corruption.

– *With a report from Gloria Galloway*

A more-detailed story on Mr. Manley's comments at The Globe's editorial board will be published in Thursday's Globe and Mail

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