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Canada will have tough time getting help in Afghanistan; European allies sympathetic, but not ready to commit troops, NATO observers say

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Paper ultimatums are unlikely to yield any wholesale solutions for Canada's vexing military struggle in southern Afghanistan, according to European diplomats and analysts familiar with the inner workings of NATO.

While expressing general agreement with the recommendations of Canada's blue-ribbon panel on Afghanistan, European military and political sources said that with the possible exception of the United States, no single ally is in a position to meet the call of providing more than symbolic reinforcements to the project to stabilize embattled Kandahar province.

"The Manley report suggests that Canada must succeed where the Dutch failed in finding willing partners to share the heaviest burden in the south," said Frank van Kappen, a retired Dutch military commander and NATO adviser.

"We (Dutch) said we would extend our mission, but only if others were willing to stick out their necks beside us. And we got a meagre response. And now the Canadians are in the very same spot, where the best you can hope for is small, symbolic pieces from your reluctant allies."

On the surface, the 90-page report tabled by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley registered barely a ripple outside Canada. The Financial Times was alone among the London dailies to give it so much as a mention. The New York Times was alone among major American papers.

Brief reports by the Iranian state news agency and Al Jazeera focused on the divisive nature of the Canadian debate, while the websites of the BBC and Australian broadcaster ABC each posted stories focusing on the panel's recommendation for an "indefinite" extension of a Canadian presence as long as NATO meets certain conditions.

Nearer to the corridors of NATO headquarters in Brussels, the report landed with a heavier thump, with officials calling the document a significant piece of Canadian grist for the diplomatic chatter leading up to a NATO summit in Bucharest in April.

Political sources throughout Europe shrugged off the panel's recommendation that 1,000 additional NATO troops be found as a condition of Ottawa extending the Canadian mission beyond February 2009. Instead,

Canada will have tough time getting help in Afghanistan; European allies sympathetic, but not ready to com

those privy to the inner workings of NATO negotiations outlined a possibility of NATO allies conjuring so-called "confetti" deployments -- small contingents of 100 or fewer troops to aid in the Kandahar mission.

France, Italy and Australia were cited as the most fertile hunting grounds for Canadian officials lobbying for fresh boots in Kandahar. One diplomatic source acknowledged "conversations are underway" between French and Canadian officials on the possible addition of French special forces and training teams to assist the building of the fledgling Afghan National Army.

"It would be a mistake to think that an ally so heavily invested in Afghanistan as Canada is going to find one single ally to replace them completely," the source told the Toronto Star.

"France is in full sympathy with the Canadian situation. France knows the price Canada has paid and wants to help, whether it is with planes, helicopters, special forces or training teams. But don't expect 5,000 troops from France in the south. This is not the conception."

In Germany, where widespread domestic opposition to combat operations limits the manoeuvrability of a government that is heavily invested in the more stable northern areas of Afghanistan, few expect any significant new contributions to the NATO-led effort. Not only is the German deployment strictly controlled by parliament, Germany is also under intense, increasing pressure to muster 250 additional soldiers to replace a Norwegian rapid-reaction force whose deployment in northern Afghanistan is soon to expire.

"It is easy to point fingers. And if I were in Canada's situation I would probably do the same. But the reality in Germany is that you can't even use the word 'fighting' in public," said one official. "As soon as you say it, 90 per cent of German society says, 'Let's get out of there.'"

Canada will have tough time getting help in Afghanistan; European allies sympathetic, but not ready to come

Troops will not win the hearts and minds of Afghans

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I am among the 219 Canadian individuals and organizations who submitted their views to John Manley on Canada's future role in Afghanistan.

But after reading his report I am disappointed.

"Foreign invasion is not a solution for the disastrous situation of Afghanistan. As our history demonstrates, we don't want occupation," said Malalai Joya, 29, the youngest female member of Afghanistan's parliament, when interviewed in December 2007 by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

"Six years of Western military occupation clearly show that these armies have not come to provide us with security. The U.S. and its allies, including Canada, are supporting the sworn enemies of our people. If they continue this wrong policy, one day they will be faced with the massive resistance of our people, as our history shows," Joya warned.

But Manley and his panel did not bother to interview Joya before writing their report. It seems that her views – the authoritative product of history, culture and immediate lived experience – were not the views Manley was looking for.

Instead of recommending that Canada's mission steer a new course toward an internationally supported political solution that could achieve peace and stability, and allow us to bring our troops home sooner, Manley's group wants Canadian forces to continue on without a set time limit, staying until the Afghan police and army are able (if ever) to take over their own security duties in southern Afghanistan.

What Manley did not tell Canadians up front is that such a recommendation is nothing more than an open-ended strategy that actually avoids commitment to concrete and practical objectives, such as peacefully resolving the conflict that is making progress in any other area impossible to achieve.

It has become painfully clear that NATO countries cannot trust the Afghan army and police with sophisticated equipment for fear it will fall into the hands of the Taliban, or that the local officers themselves will desert regular government forces and join the Taliban. This very real possibility makes any suggestion that the above objective is achievable is a blatant falsehood.

A Rand Corporation study stated that NATO needs 20 soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants to wipe out the Taliban, which translates to a force of about 500,000. The NATO coalition currently has only 30,000 to 50,000 — enough to kill civilians on a daily basis, but not enough to control even a small part of Afghanistan. Canada

maintains more than 2,500 troops in the country, mainly in the dangerous southern province of Kandahar.

The recent death of 26-year-old Richard Renaud from the Quebec City area marks the 77th time a Canadian soldier has died in Afghanistan since the mission began in 2002. In addition, one diplomat – Glyn Berry – was killed, bringing the current death toll to 78.

Asking NATO to post 1,000 more soldiers in Kandahar to help our troops may reduce Canadian casualties, but will not bring anyone closer to solving the problem.

In November 2007, the Washington Post reported that American intelligence analysts acknowledge there have been some battlefield victories in Afghanistan, but they highlight the unchallenged Taliban expansion into new territory, an increase in opium poppy cultivation, and the weakness of President Hamid Karzai's government as signs that the war effort is deteriorating.

Manley did not mention in his report, even for the record, that repeated opinion polls have shown that the majority of Canadians do not support Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Forty-seven per cent of Canadians want our troops brought back from Afghanistan as soon as possible, and in Quebec the number who want the mission to end immediately is even higher, at 57 per cent. Polls show that only 17 per cent of Canadians want our troops to continue in their current combat role, while 31 per cent said that Canadians should remain in Kandahar, but turn combat responsibilities over to another NATO country.

The Manley report mentioned the suffering of the Afghan people, but only in passing. Yet in 2007 alone, more than 6,000 Afghan people were killed, according to reports by The Associated Press, bringing the number of Afghan deaths to about 40,000 since 2001.

The British-based international aid agency, Oxfam, has warned that urgent action is needed to avert a humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan where millions face "severe hardship comparable with sub-Saharan Africa." Oxfam further cautioned that aid-spending on Afghanistan has been only a small fraction (about three per cent) of the military expenditure, and that most aid money received is diverted into high salaries for officials and administrators.

This conflict cannot be resolved through blunt military force. Canada should bring its troops home by February 2009 and should call for an urgent UN peace conference on Afghanistan.

Our MPs have the moral and political responsibility of treating the lives of Canadian men and women serving in Afghanistan with the same value they place on the lives of their own families.

Instead of sending people with weapons and heavy artillery, Canada should send an army of peacemakers, teachers, engineers, doctors, and nurses. We should send mine-clearing equipment and have a plan in place to build the best training centres, universities, and hospitals.

Let's try to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. Anyone who knows the character of Afghans will know this is a win-win situation, one well worth taking the risk.

"It has become painfully clear that NATO countries cannot trust the Afghan army and police with sophisticated equipment for fear it will fall into the hands of the Taliban, and that the local officers themselves will desert and join the Taliban. "

Mohamed Elmasry of Kitchener is national president of the Canadian Islamic Congress. He can be reached at np@canadianislamiccongress.com

Manley has laid out the cold, hard facts on Afghanistan

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From the moment the Taliban was driven from power but not from the country, Canada's role in Afghanistan has been a mission in search of a story. Succeeding where a secretive government failed, John Manley found that narrative and is telling it simply.

What's most remarkable about this week's report is that it's so unremarkable. With the exception of the challenge to the prime minister to demonstrate the leadership he claims, not much is new.

Those whose curiosity stretching beyond the compelling drama of young Canadians in peril have known the Afghanistan mission was in trouble since the attention of the United States drifted to Iraq. Troop and treasury commitments have fallen dangerously below the minimums necessary to give the counter-insurgency and reconstruction a chance. Opium and development strategies are as scattered -- and as self-defeating -- as the varied tactics of NATO and other coalition partners whose pro forma presence better reflect domestic politics than what's required at the front.

Grist to the academic conference mill, Afghanistan's hard truths were largely lost in the soft sell of political spin. From the House of Commons to Hockey Night in Canada, questions that demand answers were either deflected as unpatriotic or confused with gladiatorial sports.

Manley's panellists may finally have brought a merciful end to all that. Facts and analysis, not just anecdotes and jingoism, are in the open and ready for consideration.

Not everyone will reach the same conclusions. Still, for the first time since troops were deployed to Kandahar by a Liberal government more concerned with the United States than knowledgeable about Afghanistan, Canadians can trace a plot-line from past to future.

Reduced even from Manley's succinctness, it goes like this: Blessed by the United Nations and NATO, Canada is honouring its evolved peace tradition and safeguarding global security by rescuing a failed state, a state we will leave when Afghanistan can defend itself. That makes more sense and is more compelling than muttering about 9/11 retribution or promising to drag Afghanistan -- which is really just a loose feudal affiliation -- into democracy's light.

The catch is those same hard truths Conservatives don't like talking about. The Taliban is resurgent, NATO is flagging, the drug biz is booming and corruption rampant.

Instead of ducking, Manley faces those challenges in warning that the mission risks failure unless NATO walks the talk about its priority mission.

Commitment and co-ordination must replace rhetoric and chaos in the 3Ds of defence, diplomacy and development. Most of all, the prime minister needs to personally shoulder the burden of protecting and advancing Canadian interests in the most profound and complex expression of foreign policy in 50 years.

Manley's advice is sound and as applicable to Liberals as to Conservatives. St phane Dion's insistence that Canada arbitrarily end its combat role next year and yet somehow continue renovating a failed state is no more sophisticated or reasonable than Stephen Harper's dismissal of mission criticism as comforting the enemy.

In providing the most candid situation report and reasonable recommendations yet, Manley has done more than escape the personally fatal label of the prime minister's pet Liberal. He's given Canadians a narrative that informs rather than inflames the debate — one that leads toward understanding, and perhaps even consensus.

James Travers writes on national affairs.

Canada secretly halted Afghan prisoner transfers; 'Credible allegation of mistreatment' spurred government's abrupt policy shift

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The Canadian government secretly stopped transferring Afghan detainees to local authorities almost three months ago after seeing evidence of torture, in a bombshell admission by federal lawyers.

The change comes a year after the Conservative government ridiculed its opponents for raising torture allegations and Prime Minister Stephen Harper accused them of being pro-Taliban.

But an abrupt policy shift was announced in a letter submitted this week by federal lawyers to Amnesty International as they prepare a Federal Court case against the human-rights organization. A prisoner told Canadian officials he'd been knocked unconscious, beaten with electrical cables, whipped with a rubber hose, and he told the Canadians where they could find the torture instruments.

He then showed them a bruise, and took the Canadians to his prison cell where they found the hose and cable under a chair.

That Nov. 5 account is one of numerous allegations of torture included in government documents filed in advance of a Federal Court appearance yesterday. Another one describes electrocution.

Civil libertarians and opposition parties have warned that Canada could be violating the Geneva Convention by turning over captives to Afghan authorities with the knowledge they could be tortured.

Groups including Amnesty International have sued Ottawa in an effort to block further transfers.

When Amnesty International pressed for details about the Nov. 5 incident, government lawyer J. Sanderson Graham sent the group a letter this week explaining what happened next.

Graham said Canadian authorities were informed of "a credible allegation of mistreatment" during that visit with prisoners in an Afghan detention facility.

Canadian soldiers immediately suspended the transfers.

"As a consequence, there have been no transfers of detainees to Afghan authorities since that date," said Graham's letter.

Canada secretly halted Afghan prisoner transfers; 'Credible allegation of mistreatment' spurred government's

"The allegation is under investigation by the Afghan authorities. Canada will resume transferring detainees when it believes it can do so in accordance with its international legal obligations."

Amnesty International expressed disgust at the government's handling of the file.

First the Conservatives mocked people who raised concerns about torture, then they fought them in court, and finally they changed their policy months ago and kept it secret from the public, Amnesty notes.

All this while a public debate raged about Canada's future role in Afghanistan and a blue-ribbon panel spent three months preparing a position paper meant to guide the debate.

The panel led by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley had already criticized the government for being too secretive and of sugar-coating the realities of the Afghan mission. Manley said that Canadians were mature enough for a frank talk from their federal government and that they deserved one.

"It's very disheartening and disturbing," said Alex Neve, the head of Amnesty's Canadian section.

"It's troubling to think the government felt it was not necessary or appropriate to share that decision with Canadians. It's only come out now, and very reluctantly.

"We've seen so much denial and political posturing over this issue for many months now. This is a serious issue, when we're talking about torture. It should not be about politics, it should not be about delays and obstruction.

"We should have clarity, accountability and transparency. And up to this point we have seen anything but."

We must get the job done

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Along with the economy, the federal election campaign expected this year will be dominated by a debate over Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

It's sure to be divisive. The federal opposition parties and most Canadians have said they want our troops out of the war zone as scheduled next year.

But a panel headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley this week recommended otherwise. Manley wants more help from NATO, as well he should. And he wants more equipment, a reasonable request. But otherwise, he says, we should stick it out in Kandahar province beyond 2009.

In doing so, he is simply stating for the record what so many of us know in our hearts: can we leave before the job is done?

What are our military goals?

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SOURCE: Port Hope Evening Guide

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The long–awaited report of the prime minister's "blue–ribbon panel," headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, this week recommended Canada's involvement in Afghanistan be extended indefinitely. And, in one way, an indefinite stay makes sense. When Canadians went overseas to fight in the Second World War in 1939, we did not set a deadline. We did not say we would stay until the war was won or until 1943, whichever came first.

Afghanistan is more like a guerrilla war, with a nebulous and ever–changing enemy and goals that have never been fully defined. And, there's the rub. Canada's reasons for entering this conflict, and its goals for its involvement, have never been clearly spelled out for the Canadian people.

If we are sending in military personnel, we need military goals rather than deadlines, goals that a majority of the Canadian people can support, and for which they are willing to spend the blood of their sons and daughters.

Handover of Afghan detainees halted; After seeing torture evidence, Ottawa secretly changed policy

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BYLINE: Alexander Panetta
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OTTAWA – In a secret policy shift almost three months ago, the Canadian government stopped transferring Afghan prisoners to local authorities upon witnessing evidence of torture, according to a bombshell letter.

The revelation comes a year after the Conservative government ridiculed its opponents for raising torture allegations and Prime Minister Stephen Harper accused them of being pro–Taliban.

The abrupt shift was divulged in a letter submitted this week by federal lawyers to a pair of human rights organizations that have launched a case in Federal Court.

A prisoner told Canadian officials he'd been beaten unconscious, whipped with electrical cables, belted with a rubber hose, and he told the Canadians exactly where they could find the torture instruments.

After showing them a bruise, he led the Canadians to his prison cell where they discovered the hose and cable under a chair.

That Nov. 5 account is one of numerous allegations of torture included in government documents filed in advance of a Federal Court appearance today. Another one describes electrocution.

Civil libertarians and opposition parties have warned that Canada could be violating the Geneva conventions by turning over captives to Afghan authorities with the knowledge they could be tortured.

Amnesty International and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association have sued Ottawa in an effort to block further transfers – and the resulting court documents are the only reason Canada's policy shift has come to light.

When Amnesty International pressed for details about the Nov. 5 incident, government lawyer J. Sanderson Graham sent the group a letter this week explaining what happened next.

Graham said Canadian authorities were informed of "a credible allegation of mistreatment" during that visit with prisoners in an Afghan detention facility.

"As a consequence, there have been no transfers of detainees to Afghan authorities since that date," said Graham's letter.

"The allegation is under investigation by the Afghan authorities. Canada will resume transferring detainees when it believes it can do so in accordance with its international legal obligations."

A spokeswoman for the prime minister had little to say about the policy shift, except to note that it stemmed from an agreement between the Canadian and Afghan governments to monitor detainees.

Amnesty International expressed disgust at the government's handling of the file.

First Conservatives mocked people who raised concerns about torture, then they fought them in court, and finally they changed their policy months ago and kept it secret from the public, Amnesty notes. All this while a public debate raged about Canada's future role in Afghanistan and a blue-ribbon panel spent three months preparing a study meant to guide the debate.

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"We've seen so much denial and political posturing over this issue for many months now. This is a serious issue, when we're talking about torture. It should not be about politics, it should not be about delays and obstruction.

"We should have clarity, accountability and transparency. And up to this point we have seen anything but."

The Conservatives did not officially confirm the policy change, calling it an operational military matter that is the sole responsibility of the Canadian Forces.

"The government will not provide any comment on operational matters," said Harper spokeswoman Sandra Buckler.

She added, however, that Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier informed the House of Commons in November that Canadian officials had seen a "Taliban prisoner with conditions that concerned them."

Bernier credited a May 2007 detainee-monitoring deal for the discovery: "The allegation has come to light because we have a good agreement with the Afghan government."

The Conservatives' opponents were not impressed.

They called it another example of secrecy and stonewalling from a government that was elected on a promise to offer unprecedented openness and accountability.

"We're losing lives in Afghanistan. Canadians have a right to know what's going on there," said NDP defence critic Dawn Black.

"Parliament's never been informed. . . . I find it just appalling on an issue as important as this."

CBC National News, Wednesday, Jan. 23

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CALGARY _ A 40-year-old woman is murdered in a random attack; Calgary police issue a warning to women to avoid deserted transit platforms and bus stops, and to stay in well-lit areas or in groups when out at night. CVD PREVIOUSLY.

VICTORIA _ Victoria's interim police chief launches an internal investigation into the restraint of a 15-year-old girl in a police cell; Willow Kinloch is suing the Victoria police department, alleging officers unlawfully assaulted and confined her in May 2005. CVD.

OTTAWA _ Convincing NATO countries to deploy an additional 1,000 troops to southern Afghanistan to support Canadian soldiers should not be that difficult, according to the members of an independent panel led by John Manley. MAIN ELEMENTS CVD.

OTTAWA _ A letter from federal lawyers to Amnesty International says that the Canadian Forces stopped handing over detainees to Afghan authorities months ago. CVD.

TORONTO _ The S&P/TSX composite index closes with a gain of 16 points at 12,657; that is a big rebound from its lows of the day, when the index was off 425 points; many analysts say that weaker economic times are ahead. CVD.

DUBAI _ Finance Minister Jim Flaherty says economic growth expectations are lower for 2008 and that it will be a better financial year in 2009. MAIN ELEMENTS CVD.

OTTAWA _ Actor Heath Ledger's initial autopsy is inconclusive; some liken Ledger to James Dean. CVD.

UNDATED _ Robert Latimer, a Saskatchewan farmer imprisoned for killing his severely handicapped daughter, is appealing the National Parole Board's decision to deny him release. CVD.

RAFAH, Gaza Strip _ Tens of thousands of Gazans race across a once forbidding border to bring purchases back home, where vital supplies were running low because of an Israeli blockade. CVD.

TORONTO _ Canadian company Mirage releases a new cigarette that smells like vanilla. FEATURE.

UNDATED _ Another engineer quits over proposed sale of Radarsat and Canadarm to a U.S. arms-maker. CVD.

ST. JOHN'S _ Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams admits he illegally used his hand-held cellphone while driving and is prepared to face the consequences. CVD.

The Canadian Press – Toronto

Canada secretly stopped Afghan detainee transfers after seeing torture evidence

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PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 630

OTTAWA _ In a secret policy shift almost three months ago, the Canadian government stopped transferring Afghan prisoners to local authorities upon witnessing evidence of torture, according to a bombshell letter.

The revelation comes a year after the Conservative government ridiculed its opponents for raising torture allegations and Prime Minister Stephen Harper accused them of being pro-Taliban.

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"As a consequence, there have been no transfers of detainees to Afghan authorities since that date," said Graham's letter.

"The allegation is under investigation by the Afghan authorities. Canada will resume transferring detainees when it believes it can do so in accordance with its international legal obligations."

A spokeswoman for the prime minister had little to say about the policy shift, except to note that it stemmed from an agreement between the Canadian and Afghan governments to monitor detainees.

Amnesty International expressed disgust at the government's handling of the file.

First Conservatives mocked people who raised concerns about torture, then they fought them in court, and finally they changed their policy months ago and kept it secret from the public, Amnesty notes.

All this while a public debate raged about Canada's future role in Afghanistan and a blue-ribbon panel spent three months preparing a study meant to guide the debate.

The panel led by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley had already criticized the government for being too secretive and of sugar-coating the realities of the Afghan mission.

Manley said that Canadians were mature enough for a frank talk from their federal government and that they deserved one.

“It's very disheartening and disturbing,” said Alex Neve, the head of Amnesty's Canadian section.

“It's troubling to think the government felt it was not necessary or appropriate to share that decision with Canadians. It's only come out now, and very reluctantly.

“We've seen so much denial and political posturing over this issue for many months now. This is a serious issue, when we're talking about torture. It should not be about politics, it should not be about delays and obstruction.

“We should have clarity, accountability and transparency. And up to this point we have seen anything but.”

The Conservatives did not officially confirm the policy change, calling it an operational military matter that is the sole responsibility of the Canadian Forces.

“The government will not provide any comment on operational matters,” said Harper spokeswoman Sandra Buckler.

She added, however, that Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier informed the House of Commons in November that Canadian officials had seen a “Taliban prisoner with conditions that concerned them.”

Bernier credited a May 2007 detainee-monitoring deal for the discovery: “The allegation has come to light because we have a good agreement with the Afghan government.”

The Conservatives' opponents were not impressed.

They called it another example of secrecy and stonewalling from a government that was elected on a promise to offer unprecedented openness and accountability.

“We're losing lives in Afghanistan. Canadians have a right to know what's going on there,” said NDP defence critic Dawn Black.

“Parliament's never been informed . . . I find it just appalling on an issue as important as this.”

Roadside bomb kills 78th Canadian soldier on Afghan mission, two hurt

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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 529

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ Another roadside bomb has claimed the life of a Canadian soldier in a region that's been pockmarked several times this month already by the crude, but powerful explosive devices.

The soldier was killed and two were injured when their light armoured vehicle hit a roadside bomb in Panjwaii district in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday afternoon.

The name of the dead soldier, the 78th to die on the Canadian mission in Afghanistan since it began in 2002, was not released at the request of his family.

The two injured soldiers were able to notify their families and have since been released from hospital.

``Through their devotion and effort, our soldiers bring the hope of a better life for the Afghan people," said Brig-Gen. Guy Laroche in making the announcement as sun began to rise on another Afghan morning.

``A life that provides an opportunity for Afghan children to grow up in peace as young Canadians do back home."

The first three weeks of January have exacted a deadly toll in Afghanistan in a way not seen during this season in recent years.

The winter months are generally quiet in Afghanistan with the cold weather hampering the movement of insurgents.

The last time a Canadian was killed in January was in 2006, when a suicide bomber claimed the life of diplomat Glynn Berry.

But Wednesday's death marks the fourth fatality this month and the second from a roadside bomb.

The tempo in the field remains the same now as it did during the spring and summer months, Laroche said.

``The difference is there is no direct engagements obviously," he said. ``What they have been using is IEDs obviously as their weapon of choice."

On Jan. 15, Trooper Richard Renaud was killed while on a reconnaissance patrol in the Arghandab district.

His Coyote vehicle hit an IED, which also injured two soldiers.

Though Renaud's death occurred in what's previously been a more secure area of Kandahar province, the volatile Panjwaii district that was the scene of Wednesday's death has seen a number of IED incidents in recent weeks.

The improvised explosive devices, homemade bombs fashioned out of whatever insurgents can scrounge, have been hitting not only Canadians, but Afghans as well.

On Jan. 19, five Afghans were killed when the taxi they were riding in hit a bomb in Panjwahi, and three others were injured.

“Usually the Taliban are planting mines for Afghan and NATO forces but this time it exploded on civilians,” local government leader Shah Baran said at the time.

On Jan. 16, seven Canadian soldiers suffered minor injuries in two separate explosions hitting two vehicles in the same convoy nearly three hours apart.

Two days earlier, a blast in the same region caused only property damage.

On Wednesday, the soldiers had been on a road clearing operation that involved bulldozers and other pieces of equipment designed to rid the area of bombs.

“What we are doing essentially, we are conducting operations to secure the area, not only for us but also the Afghans,” he said.

“We won't stop helping the people of Afghanistan.”

The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, a security company that surveys the security situation in Afghanistan for aid workers and other groups, said in a year-end report for 2007 that 1,977 civilians were killed in insurgency-related violence last year.

IEDs have been responsible for the majority of Canadian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan.

Also this month, four Canadian soldiers were injured in Zangabad, about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar city, when their vehicle struck an IED that was planted along a dirt road.

The troops were on a road-clearance patrol aimed at finding and defusing mines at the time.

The patrols see the troops using specialized equipment to help locate and destroy the mines.

But observers of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, including an independent panel chaired by former Liberal leader John Manley, have said the only way to protect against the devices entirely is to get soldiers off the road by using helicopters or airplanes to transport soldiers across the country.

--Fifth NewsWatch--

DATE: 2008.01.23
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 247

European markets have slipped in early trading today.

However, investors in Asia cheered yesterday's interest-rate cut by the U-S Federal Reserve.

Most Asian markets bounced back today, in some cases recovering most of what had been shed the past couple of days.

Yesterday, Toronto's T-S-X index gained back 509 points -- about 85 per cent of what it lost in Monday's freefall.

The Dow Jones lost 128 points. (5)

(Manley-Afghan-Development)

Canada's development contribution to Afghanistan needs to be revamped.

A panel headed by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley says a higher priority needs to be given to visible projects that address immediate needs in Kandahar.

For groups such as World Vision Canada, that represents a departure from the low-key, long-term approach -- aimed at making lasting change.

The aid group is expressing disappointment. (5)

(Mideast-Gaza)

Militants in Gaza are using explosives to blow up huge chunks of the 11-kilometre long wall separating Gaza from Egypt.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have crossed into Egypt to buy supplies that have been scarce under an Israeli blockade.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak says he instructed his troops to allow the Palestinians into Egypt because they are starving.

Israel says it's concerned Hamas militants could use the opening to bring weapons and ammunition into Gaza. (5)

(Crash-Three-Dead)

Investigators are probing a deadly crash in the nation's capital.

Three people were killed early this morning when an S-U-V collided with an Ottawa transit bus.

Authorities say the victims were in the S-U-V, which was carrying five people.

Paramedics say the two men and a woman were pronounced dead at the scene. (5)

(NL-Snow-Winds)

A blast of winter for the Avalon Peninsula and throughout eastern Newfoundland.

High winds and heavy snow are causing white-out conditions.

The city of St. John's and the peninsula are under wind and blowing snow warnings.

The forecast only calls for 10-centimetres of snow, but it will be whipped up by wind gusts of 100-kilometres per hour.

Many schools and businesses are closed today. (5)

(OBIT: Heath Ledger)

Heath Ledger's family in Australia says his death in New York yesterday was simply an accident.

An autopsy is planned today on the Oscar-nominated actor, whose body was discovered in his apartment.

Police say there was no obvious sign of suicide, although they did find prescription sleeping pills nearby.

Heath Ledger was 28. (5)

(NewsWatch by Geri Smith)

--Seventh NewsWatch--

DATE: 2008.01.23
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 252

Investors' recession worries are pointing to another lower stock market open in New York today.

U-S stock futures deteriorated early today despite a surprise interest rate cut by the U-S Federal Reserve yesterday.

The rate cut helped Asian markets rebound today but European markets were down by midday.

The Toronto stock market may face unpredictable trading.

The T-S-X this week took its deepest plunge in seven years before recovering much of the losses. (7)

(Crash-Three-Dead) (Audio: 091)

Three people are dead after an overnight accident in Ottawa.

Investigators say a city bus and an S-U-V collided, with the force of the crash sending the bus off the roadway and into a snowbank.

A light standard was sheared off its supports and dragged several metres.

The dead are two men and a woman.

Two other women are in hospital. (7)

(Manley-Afghan) (Audio: 004)

International aid groups don't think much of a report on Afghanistan from a panel of eminent Canadians.

The document says Canada's development contribution to the war-torn nation must be revamped.

The panel -- led by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley -- is calling for more visible projects that address immediate needs in Kandahar.

World Vision says that's a change from the current low-key, long-term approach -- and the call for a new development strategy smacks of desperation. (7)

(Mideast-Gaza)

Israel says it's up to Egypt to control its border with Gaza after masked gunmen destroyed most of the border wall.

The breach allowed thousands of Gazans to cross into Egypt to get basic necessities.

Israel says it's worried guns and militants may be flowing into Gaza, too. (7)

(OBIT: Heath Ledger) (Audio: 95)

Investigators are trying to determine what killed Heath Ledger.

The Australian-born actor was found dead with sleeping pills nearby in his Manhattan apartment yesterday afternoon.

But police say there's no obvious sign that Ledger took his own life.

He'd just recently finished filming his role as the Joker in "The Dark Knight," a sequel to 2005's "Batman Begins."

Heath Ledger was 28. (7)

(Diana Inquest)

The only survivor of the accident that killed Princess Diana, Dodi Fayed and their driver says he's not part of any conspiracy to hide the truth.

The cover-up accusation comes from Fayed's father.

Bodyguard Trevor Rees has told the London inquest into the crash he still has no memory of the accident. (7)

(NewsWatch by Geri Smith)

TOR OUT YYY

DATE: 2008.01.23
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 286

The Fed's big, emergency interest-rate cut has been good news for Asian markets, which rebounded today from a two-day plunge based on U-S recession fears.

But European markets slipped in early trading and American futures suggest the Dow will open down a bit.

The T-S-X in Toronto gained back 509 points yesterday.

Meanwhile, leading economists are expressing mixed opinions about whether a U-S recession could spread around the world.

At the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, economists do say the overall forecast for the global economy this year is gloomy. (6)

(Conrad-Black-Bail)

Conrad Black hopes to stay out of jail until his appeal is heard. A lawyer for the former media baron is asking a U-S judge to allow Black to remain free until the appeal of his convictions is heard later this year.

Black was convicted in Chicago in July on three counts of fraud and one count of obstruction of justice.

He was sentenced last month to six-and-a-half years in prison and was ordered to report to jail March 3rd. (6)

(Manley-Afghan-Development)

Military families seem to like John Manley's report on Afghanistan.

The panel headed by the former Liberal deputy prime minister says Canada should extend its military mission only if other countries step up with troops.

Jim Davis lost his son, Corporal Paul Davis, in 2006.

He says he's pleased the document recommends NATO play a bigger role in the volatile south. (6)

(Mideast-Gaza)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak says he ordered his troops to allow Palestinians to cross from the Gaza Strip because the Palestinians were starving.

Border guards stood by and watched today as tens of thousands Gazans flooded into Egypt after militants destroyed a border wall.

On foot, in cars or on donkey carts, Gazans are returning with food and other essentials made scarce by an

Israeli blockade. (6)

(OBIT: Heath Ledger)

An autopsy will be needed to determine the cause of death of an Oscar-nominated actor.

Heath Ledger was found dead yesterday at his Manhattan apartment.

The Australian-born actor was 28.

Ledger was nominated for an Oscar for his performance as a gay cowboy in ``Brokeback Mountain." (6)

(HEALTH-Diabetes-Obesity-Surgery)

There's new proof obesity surgery can cure diabetes.

A new study finds patients who had their stomachs surgically reduced in size were five times more likely to be diabetes free after the operation.

After surgery, most of the patients were able to stop taking diabetic drugs and have normal blood tests. (6)

(NewsWatch by Geri Smith)

--Twentieth NewsWatch--

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There are signs from the Far East that recent stock market plunges may be over, at least for the moment.

In early Wednesday trading in Hong Kong, the Hang Seng Index is up 7.5 per cent.

And, the Nikkei Index in Tokyo is up 3.4 per cent.

On Tuesday, the S-and-P T-S-X in Toronto gained 509 points, which is 84 per cent of what it lost Monday.

In New York, the Dow Jones lost 128 points, which is only one per cent. (20)

(Manley-Afghan-Families) (Audio: 162)

Tim Goddard, the father of a Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan, says he supports a report from a blue-ribbon panel on the Afghan mission.

The panel, led by ex-finance minister John Manley, calls for Canadian soldiers to stay in Afghanistan indefinitely provided NATO sends more troops and equipment.

Tim Goddard -- whose daughter, Captain Nicola Goddard, was killed by a grenade in 2006 -- wants the mission to go on until the goals are reached.

He says Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan cannot beat the Taliban, adding they can only help Afghan soldiers do that. (20)

(Manley Afghan-Opposition)

The Manley report is being rejected by N-D-P Leader Jack Layton, who says Canadian soldiers should not be fighting in Afghanistan.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe says Manley moulded his report to fit the views of the Harper government, which suggests the Afghan mandate should be extended.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion says he won't comment on the Manley report until after he reads it. (20)

(OBIT-ENT-Ledger) (Audio: 204)

An autopsy will be done Wednesday in New York on Heath Ledger.

The body of the 28-year-old actor was found naked and face-down in his Manhattan apartment with prescription sleeping pills nearby.

Police say there's no obvious sign Ledger committed suicide.

Mel Gibson, who played Ledger's vengeful father in ``The Patriot," says ``to lose his life at such a young age is a tragic loss." (20)

(StatsCan–Cars)

A survey shows the two major Canadian cities that rely on cars more than any other are in Alberta.

Statistics Canada says 77 per cent of Edmonton residents relied on their cars to make all their trips on the day they were surveyed in 2005.

Calgary was second at 75 per cent.

Those least likely to use their cars for every trip were residents of Montreal, at 65 per cent.

Toronto was next at 66 per cent, followed by Vancouver at 69 per cent. (20)

(ENT–Hollywood Labour)

Informal talks are due to start Wednesday between studios and striking Hollywood writers.

Talks broke down almost seven weeks ago over the issue of paying writers for movies and shows downloaded on the Internet.

A news blackout will be in effect during the talks. (20)

(NewsWatch by Bill Marshall)

Detainee delivery halted; Canada secretly stopped handing over prisoners amid torture allegations, federal lawyers disclose

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BYLINE: Allan Woods
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Canada quietly stopped transferring battlefield detainees to Afghan prisons months ago after a credible allegation of abuse surfaced, government lawyers have revealed.

In a letter to two human rights groups this week, the government said the Canadian military stopped sending suspected insurgents to local Afghan authorities after a Nov. 5 allegation of abuse by one prisoner.

But the government change in policy was not disclosed until this week, according to Amnesty International and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, which released the government letter.

The two associations are in court seeking an order that would force the military to stop handing detainees over to the Afghans, arguing that prisoners face a reasonable chance of being mistreated.

Government documents released by court order this week revealed that a Canadian human rights officer discovered braided electrical wire and a rubber hose while interviewing a detainee who said he had been beaten with the torture implements. The prisoner showed the Canadian official a 10-centimetre bruise on his back that was consistent with mistreatment.

"There have been no transfers of detainees to Afghan authorities since that date," a letter by government lawyers, dated Jan. 22, says. "Canada will resume transferring detainees when it believes it can do so in accordance with its international legal obligations."

The government has been vigorously fighting the court case launched by the two rights groups, and appears intent on continuing to defend the practice of handing over detainees to local jailers.

The government has not disclosed how many people Canadian soldiers have detained while fighting Taliban insurgents, citing national security concerns. However, in November, an Amnesty International report put the number of transfers as high as 200.

The rights groups' case stems from allegations of widespread abuse by detainees last spring that prompted Ottawa to revise its prisoner transfer agreement with the government of Afghanistan.

The groups say the government's surprising decision to stop transfers is an implicit admission that the new agreement, which provided Canadian officials with increased oversight of detainees and prison conditions, has failed.

"The government could have anticipated at the outset that monitoring of detainees is inadequate to deal with the risk of torture," said Alex Neve, head of Amnesty International Canada. "The torture of detainees that occurred since May 3, 2007, was both predictable and avoidable."

Sandra Buckler, a spokesperson for Prime Minister Stephen Harper, said the decision to stop detainee transfers was made to allow the military to "respect their international obligations." She said detail about what soldiers are now doing with detainees is an "operational matter" and wouldn't be disclosed.

The policy of handing over detainees to Afghan authorities remains official government policy, she said. But that policy allows the Canadian Forces to "exercise their discretion" concerning the well-being of prisoners.

Jason Gratl, head of the B.C. human rights group, said it was "unfortunate" that the information was only brought to light on the eve of a court date. "The Canadian public has a right to know this information," he said in a release.

A report this week by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley rapped the Tory government for not providing enough or accurate information to the public about the details of the Afghan mission.

Panel sees beyond jingoism

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From the moment the Taliban was driven from power but not from the country, Canada's role in Afghanistan has been a mission in search of a story. Succeeding where a secretive government failed, John Manley found that narrative and is telling it simply.

What's most remarkable about this week's report is that it's so unremarkable. With the exception of the challenge to the Prime Minister to demonstrate the leadership he claims, not much is new.

Those whose curiosity stretches beyond the compelling drama of young Canadians in peril have known the Afghanistan mission was in trouble since U.S. attention drifted to Iraq. Troop and treasury commitments fall dangerously below minimums necessary to give the counter-insurgency and reconstruction a chance. Opium and development strategies are as scattered – and as self-defeating – as the varied tactics of NATO and other coalition partners whose pro-forma presence better reflect domestic politics than what's required at the front.

Grist to the academic conference mill, Afghanistan's hard truths were largely lost in the soft sell of political spin. From the House of Commons to Hockey Night in Canada, questions that demand answers were either deflected as unpatriotic or confused with gladiatorial sports.

Manley's panellists may finally have brought a merciful end to all that. Facts and analysis, not just anecdotes and jingoism, are in the open and ready for consideration.

Not everyone will reach the same conclusions. Still, for the first time since troops were deployed to Kandahar by a Liberal government more concerned with the United States than knowledgeable about Afghanistan, Canadians can trace a plot line from past to future.

Reduced even from Manley's succinctness, it goes like this: Blessed by the UN and NATO, Canada is honouring its evolved peace tradition and safeguarding global security by rescuing a failed state it will leave when Afghanistan can defend itself. That makes more sense and is more compelling than muttering about 9/11 retribution or promising to drag a loose feudal affiliation to democracy's light.

The catch is those same hard truths Conservatives don't like talking about. The Taliban is resurgent, NATO is flagging, the drug biz is booming and corruption rampant.

Instead of ducking, Manley faces those challenges in warning that the mission risks failure unless NATO walks the talk about its priority mission. Commitment and co-ordination must replace rhetoric and chaos in the 3D's of defence, diplomacy and development. Most of all, the Prime Minister needs to personally shoulder

the burden of protecting and advancing Canadian interests in the most profound and complex expression of foreign policy in 50 years.

Manley's advice is sound and as applicable to Liberals as to Conservatives. Stephane Dion's insistence that Canada arbitrarily end its combat role next year and yet somehow continue renovating a failed state is no more sophisticated or reasonable than Stephen Harper's dismissal of mission criticism as comforting the enemy.

In providing the most candid situation report and reasonable recommendations yet, Manley has done more than escape the personally fatal label of the Prime Minister's pet Liberal. He's given Canadians a narrative that informs rather than inflames the debate, one that leads toward understanding and perhaps even consensus.

James Travers' national affairs column appears Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Few allies can help Canada: Diplomats; Large reinforcements unlikely in Afghanistan

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ILLUSTRATION: AFP Getty Images file photo The Dutch have also had difficulty finding adequate reinforcements for their role in southern Afghanistan. ;
BYLINE: Mitch Potter
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2008 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 498

Paper ultimatums are unlikely to yield any wholesale solutions for Canada's vexing military struggle in southern Afghanistan, according to European diplomats and analysts familiar with the inner workings of NATO.

While expressing general agreement with the recommendations of Canada's blue-ribbon panel on Afghanistan, European military and political sources said that with the possible exception of the United States, no single ally is in a position to meet the call of providing more than symbolic reinforcements to the project to stabilize Kandahar province.

"The Manley report suggests that Canada must succeed where the Dutch failed in finding willing partners to share the heaviest burden in the south," said Frank van Kappen, a retired Dutch military commander and NATO adviser, referring to the report tabled by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley.

"We (Dutch) said we would extend our mission, but only if others were willing to stick out their necks beside us. And we got a meagre response. And now the Canadians are in the very same spot, where the best you can hope for is small, symbolic pieces from your reluctant allies."

Political sources throughout Europe shrugged off the panel's recommendation that 1,000 additional NATO troops be found as a condition of Ottawa extending the Canadian mission beyond February 2009. Instead, those privy to the inner workings of NATO negotiations outlined a possibility of NATO allies conjuring so-called "confetti" deployments – small contingents of 100 or fewer troops to aid in the Kandahar mission.

France, Italy and Australia were cited as the most fertile hunting grounds for Canadian officials lobbying for fresh boots in Kandahar.

One diplomatic source acknowledged "conversations are underway" between French and Canadian officials on the possible addition of French forces and training teams to assist the building of the fledgling Afghan National Army.

In Germany, where widespread domestic opposition to combat operations limits the manoeuvrability of a government, few expect any significant new contributions to the NATO-led effort. Not only is the German deployment strictly controlled by parliament, Germany is also under increasing pressure to muster 250

additional soldiers to replace a Norwegian rapid–reaction force whose deployment in northern Afghanistan is soon to expire.

Speculation abounds, meanwhile, that the U.S., which has the biggest presence in Afghanistan, with troops under its own command and also beneath NATO's umbrella, may by default be forced into filling any Canadian gaps in Kandahar, should Ottawa decide ultimately to draw down its troop levels.

Van Kappen said a U.S. remedy for the Canadian problem is even more likely, given that all available new Afghan army troops were only recently absorbed into the Dutch military stabilization effort in neighbouring Uruzgan province.

"The only reason the Dutch stayed is because the Afghans dispatched a brigade to Uruzgan. There are only 1,200 Afghan soldiers in this brigade and they are only half–trained. So now we are trying to train them on the job," he said.

"But that doesn't leave much in the Afghan army for the Canadians to draw upon."

Manley urges 'consensus'; Liberals, Conservatives should make concessions on approach to Afghan mission, chair of panel says

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Political parties should put aside their differences to "fashion a consensus" on the future of the mission in Afghanistan, says John Manley, the chair of a blue-ribbon panel that studied the future of Canada's engagement in the country.

The Conservative government and the Liberal opposition need to make concessions in the political debate that will culminate in a vote on the fate of the present 2,500-troop mission when its mandate expires in February 2009, Manley said in an interview yesterday. The Tories favour a mission extension to 2011, while the Liberals want the troops rotated out next year. The Bloc Quebecois has a similar position to the Liberals, and the New Democrats want Canadian soldiers to return to Canada immediately.

With a minority government situation and an election possible as early as this spring, the Conservatives and Liberals should, at the very least, agree not to make Afghanistan a major issue should the country go to the polls before the question is resolved, Manley said.

"If you put things in an electoral context, then parties have to find ways to differentiate themselves from other parties. It's about giving the electorate a choice and my hope is that, in this case, the least the government and the principal opposition party can do is find a way to seek out some common ground," he said.

Manley's report, released Tuesday, calls on Harper to increase diplomatic efforts to secure 1,000 additional troops to fight alongside the Canadians in Kandahar. The report also recommends the government buy or lease transport helicopters and aerial drones within the next year so that the military can more safely move troops and track insurgents. If that doesn't happen by February 2009, Canada should give notice of its intention to quit Kandahar, the report says.

Seventy-eight Canadian soldiers, and one diplomat, Glyn Berry, have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said Tuesday that he hadn't read the report, but that his party still thinks Canada should end the combat mission early next year and focus more on training the Afghan army and contributing to development work. The report called that position irresponsible and would dishonour Canadian efforts and lives already lost.

However, Bob Rae, the Liberal foreign affairs critic, provided a more nuanced response to the report, saying that the party would have to take time to examine its contents and see how the Tories, NATO and others are prepared to respond.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper is set to deliver a formal response to the report later this week.

Afghanistan expertise was sorely missing

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'Step up,' get NATO to help, PM told

Jan. 23

It is not surprising that the panel headed by John Manley has no obvious answers regarding Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. After all, this panel includes no experts on Afghanistan or the region.

Afghanistan's troubles have lasted for centuries, and many foreigners, both invaders and helpers, have failed in their aims. Unless the history behind this is understood, a meaningful contribution cannot be made. Canada's universities have no shortage of historians and scholars who are well-versed in the history of the troubled country and the many complexities surrounding the condition it is currently in. These experts should have been included on this panel.

If Canada is interested in obtaining lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, the root causes of the conflict must be identified, while keeping in mind the traditional and cultural sensitivities of the people.

Hashir Rasul, Mississauga

A lot of money spent to state the obvious

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No 'obvious answer' for Afghan

mission: Manley

thestar.com, Jan. 22

I could not have been more surprised by the report of John Manley's panel, which recommends that the military offence in Afghanistan continue indefinitely. The conditions suggested are simplistic; the Bush administration is already redeploying troops from Iraq to Afghanistan, and Canada's government – with the support of an absentee official opposition – is already committed to increased spending on military toys.

Manley and his pro-American panel could have written this report on the first day of their "research," saving Canadians the expense of their deliberations.

Phil Little, Nanaimo, B.C.

Manley panel avoids real reason for Afghan role

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BYLINE: Haroon Siddiqui
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Asked when the United States might withdraw from Iraq, George W. Bush has, for the last four years, been telling Americans, "we will stand down when the Iraqis stand up."

John Manley is telling Canadians the same thing about Afghanistan. Our troops should stay there until the Afghan army and police are trained to take over. That would be whenever that would be:

"There's no consensus among experts as to when Afghan forces will achieve sufficient size and competence ... (It) will take time ... No end date makes sense at this point."

This is just one of the many frustrating parts of the Manley panel's report. While it is honest in enumerating the failures of our Afghan mission, it is not about much else.

It is silent on what most Canadians suspect is the main reason for our presence in Afghanistan: to pacify Washington, after having refused to join the Iraq war.

Instead, the panel cites a loftier rationale: our commitment to Afghans, NATO and world security. This is disingenuous, especially given that Manley and every other panel member (Derek Burney, Jake Epp, Paul Tellier and Pamela Wallin) is known to favour keeping the Americans happy to keep our trade.

The group also sidesteps other difficult issues. Something ought to be done, it says, about the Afghan warlords, corruption and the Taliban/Al Qaeda sanctuaries in Pakistan. But it offers no clue as to what.

The panel rejects any parallel between Afghanistan and Iraq – one being a UN– approved multilateral effort and the other an American unilateral war and occupation.

But there are parallels galore: gross incompetence in managing postwar societies; scant regard by foreign forces for local customs, living conditions and civilian lives; and widespread local insurgencies.

The biggest flaw in the Manley report concerns its main recommendation: that we extend our stay.

A Canadian pullout would "condemn Afghans to a new and bloody cycle of civil wars and misrule, and raise new threats to global peace and security," "squander our investment and dishonour our sacrifice," and "undermine our influence in the UN and in NATO capitals, including Washington."

But, we must quit if NATO doesn't ante up another 1,000 troops.

One moment, it's a matter of principle, honour and world stability. The next, it's a bargaining ploy.

Even the U.S. plan to deploy 3,000 more Marines is "not, by itself, sufficient." We need those extra 1,000 troops to join the Canadians. Otherwise, our "mission is in jeopardy."

But why would NATO respond now if it hasn't so far? And even if does, how would just another 1,000 troops prop up a teetering mission?

The panel concedes what this column has long argued:

Our Afghan mission has veered off into American-style warfare, at the expense of reconstruction and development. Yet, it has failed to control the insurgency and may, in fact, have fed it.

There is no military solution. The panel says there will "have to be a negotiated political and social reconciliation" with the more acceptable elements of the Taliban.

There is a need for a coherent strategy between the international "military and civilian programs."

But given the way the Manley panel has framed the debate, Stephen Harper may see it as a licence to continue the war in Afghanistan.

It is up to the opposition to ensure that he doesn't.

Haroon Siddiqui, the Star's editorial page editor emeritus, appears Thursday and Sunday. Email: [hsiddiq @ thestar.ca](mailto:hsiddiq@thestar.ca)

Redirect Afghan aid

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Canada may be pumping \$1.2 billion into Afghanistan's redevelopment, and doing much good there, but people in Kandahar region where our troops are stationed see scant improvement in their lives.

That's the bleak conclusion from Prime Minister Stephen Harper's advisory panel on Afghanistan, led by John Manley. It should shame the government and the Canadian International Development Agency into an urgent rethink of the way we do business there.

Most Canadian aid, 85 per cent or so, is being channelled through the central Kabul government or through multilateral agencies like the Red Cross. That leaves just 15 per cent for "signature" Canadian projects across Afghanistan, such as hospitals and health stations, wells and irrigation, hydro, schools and roads. And even less for Kandahar, where CIDA too often fears to tread. What aid we do provide is slow in coming, the Manley panel found, in part due to CIDA's cumbersome procedures.

People in Kandahar, where Canadian troops are fighting Taliban insurgents, should not have to wait months or years for a health station or a well. The message that sends is that things are no better than before. That plays into the insurgents' hands.

Harper should heed Manley's advice that he make the Afghan file a personal priority and demand faster action from CIDA in Kandahar, less red tape, more staff in the field and greater transparency.

Whatever Canadians may think of our Afghan military role, there is strong public support for feeding refugees, educating children and giving families health care. The Prime Minister has the power to light a fire under the bureaucrats. Manley has held out the match.

Poppy politics Opium trade threatens to undermine effort in Afghanistan

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SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
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BYLINE: GREG WESTON
COLUMN: National Affairs
WORD COUNT: 448

John Manley's otherwise brutally frank assessment of the dismal situation facing Canada and other countries fighting in Afghanistan, curiously glosses over one of the most serious and intractable enemies of the entire effort: Opium.

This week's controversial report by a panel of experts headed by the former Liberal cabinet minister acknowledges only that "the opium trade is a complicating factor in Afghan security, and it is both a result of violent instability and a contributor to it.

"Opium profits flow to the Taliban, to criminal elements and to corrupt government officials," the Manley report notes. "Coherent counter-narcotics strategies need to be adopted by all relevant agencies."

Talk about a problem understated, and a solution easier said than done.

According to the United Nations authority on drugs and crime, the poppy fields of Afghanistan now produce a stunning 93% of the world's heroin.

Writing in the Washington Post this week, former U.S. ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, calls the Afghan narcotics trade "probably the largest single-country drug production since 19th -century China."

Afghan government officials, he says, "including some with close ties to the presidency," are protecting the drug trade and profiting from it."

In financial terms, Holbrooke estimates the Afghan opium trade currently equals about 50% of the country's official gross domestic product.

In other words, Canadian forces are currently fighting to bring order and stability to a country in which more than a third of the entire economy is controlled by drug lords and corrupt government officials supporting the opium biz.

CASH FLOW

While it is impossible to know exactly how much drug money is financing the Taliban insurgency that is killing Canadian troops, experts agree the cash flowing from the poppy fields is more than enough to keep the war going for years, if not decades, to come.

The question is obviously, what to do about it?

Holbrooke notes the U.S. is spending about \$1 billion a year on counter-narcotics programs in Afghanistan, yet, the opium harvest in 2007 actually grew by almost 30% over the previous year to a staggering 8,200 tons.

The whole expensive U.S. effort, Holbrooke says, "may be the single most ineffective program in the history of American foreign policy.

"It's not just a waste of money. It actually strengthens the Taliban and al-Qaida, as well as criminal elements within Afghanistan."

The Manley report recommends offering "effective economic provisions to induce would-be poppy farmers and middlemen to prefer and find alternative lines of work."

But Holbrooke says the "alternative livelihoods" strategy has been tried elsewhere with no success, and is even less likely to work in Afghanistan.

"Poppies are an easy crop to grow, and are far more valuable than any other product that can be grown in the rocky, remote soil of Afghanistan.

"It will take years to create the networks of roads, markets and lucrative crops that would induce farmers to switch."

As usual, George Bush has a novel idea -- namely, herbicide bombing.

Apparently he told Afghanistan's president Hamid Karzai last year: "I'm a spray man myself."

CROP ERADICATION

But Holbrooke cautions that any such poppy-eradication programs would only create a backlash among Afghans against both the local government and Western forces, and "serve as a recruitment device for the Taliban."

Uprooting the poppy trade, he argues, will be impossible without weeding out corruption in the Afghan government and police forces.

"To be sure, breaking the narco-state in Afghanistan is essential, or all else will fail," Holbrooke says. "But it will take years."

Something to consider in the coming debate over the Manley report, and how long Canadian troops should remain in Afghanistan.

Editorial Cartoon

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PAGE: 10

ILLUSTRATION: photo by TAB A woman points to a very long ribbon pinned to her shirt to a man and says: "THE 'SUPPORT OUR TROOPS' RIBBON..." Then she points to the rest of the ribbon and says: "...AND THE JOHN MANLEY EXTENSION."

WORD COUNT: 0

Poppy politics Opium trade threatens to undermine effort in Afghanistan

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PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
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BYLINE: GREG WESTON, NATIONAL AFFAIRS
WORD COUNT: 448

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Something to consider in the coming debate over the Manley report, and how long Canadian troops should remain in Afghanistan.

On Manley, don't delay the vote

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SPECTOR
SECTION: Comment
EDITION: Metro
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NORMAN SPECTOR nspector@globeandmail.com If sending soldiers into harm's way is a prime minister's most difficult decision, sending voters to the polls is the loneliest. For the first time in Canadian history, Stephen Harper has given the former decision to Parliament, so it's understandable that he'd be taking a few days to mull over the recommendations of John Manley and his committee – particularly since the group rejected all four options referred to them for consideration. But it shouldn't take much longer for the Prime Minister to conclude that he must submit Mr. Manley's masterful report to an early parliamentary vote.

Simply put, Mr. Harper first needs a mandate in order to place our NATO allies squarely before the ultimatum that is the committee's most important recommendation. The Manley group is to be congratulated for making an extension of Canada's mission contingent on the assignment of an additional battle group of about 1,000 soldiers to Kandahar.

However, without a mandate, why would our European allies bear the political cost of increasing their engagement when their ambassadors in Ottawa are no doubt reporting that Mr. Harper is unlikely to get a mission extension through Parliament? If not them, then it's the Americans – and does Mr. Harper really want to return from the April NATO meeting with George W. Bush as his sidekick? Sure, it will be tempting for the Prime Minister to wait and hope the Liberals will change their position if he can deliver the goods from NATO. But, the closer we get to next year's fixed election date, the less likely it is that Stephane Dion will want to bear the political costs of changing his position on the Kandahar mission.

With the NDP and Bloc Quebecois certain to take a tough line on any extension, the decision is squarely on the shoulders of the Leader of the Opposition – as it should be. Mr. Dion served in the government that sent Canadian troops to help oust the Taliban; from that decision flows our moral and, arguably, legal responsibility to help put Afghanistan back together. Surely Mr. Dion, who says we should not abandon Afghanistan, would not rule out staying in Kandahar before seeing whether Mr. Harper can secure a partner at the NATO meeting. Were he to do so, voters might conclude that all the Liberal talk about human rights, the responsibility to protect and the UN is just that. And that Mr. Dion is prepared to besmirch Canada's reputation for partisan gain.

The first election is always the most difficult for a premier or prime minister to call and Mr. Harper has been evincing a bad case of rookie jitters. He should stop looking at opinion polls in search of an elusive majority: Politics is as much an art as it is a science. And it's about guts. Mr. Harper may think that fixed election dates are politically principled, but the course he's on leaves the initiative with the Liberals – who've never been known to shine in that department.

Of course, if it comes to that, an election would be fought not only on Afghanistan – therein lie Mr. Harper's other reasons to force the issue. With the ethics committee about to resume its probe into the Schreiber/Mulroney affair, the Conservative brand will take additional blows – and the Prime Minister is bound to call a public inquiry when MPs finish their work. The economy is softening, and it would be best for Mr. Harper, a professional economist, to go to the polls with voters' concerns for their jobs beginning to displace the environment as a top-of-mind issue, but before they have felt any real pain. In fact, I can already hear Mr. Harper's stump speech: My friends, everything Stephane Dion knows about economics he learned studying sociology. [Pause for laughter]. In France.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; elections; foreign policy; strife; defence

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper; John Manley

REPORT ON AFGHANISTAN The messages for Harper and Dion

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BYLINE:

SECTION: Editorial

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 1005

WORD COUNT: 999

If he follows the advice of John Manley and the other panelists he appointed to examine the future of Canada's mission to Afghanistan, Stephen Harper will seize upon April's NATO summit in Bucharest to persuade our allies to send additional combat troops to Kandahar.

Fail to do so, the Prime Minister will say, and we will have no choice but to pull our own forces out of combat operations in the war-torn region. Do so, and Canada will re-commit.

It is a compelling message, given that a Canadian withdrawal would leave Kandahar in dire straits and an extension would buoy the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Afghans. But does Mr. Harper have the political capital to deliver the message and deliver a deal? Perhaps not just yet. It would be embarrassing for him, and for the country, to promise a renewed commitment of our own in return for assistance from other countries, only to have our minority Parliament vote to withdraw our troops in February of 2009. Unless Stephane Dion's Liberals could be persuaded to vote in favour of the extension (the Bloc Quebecois and the New Democrats are dead set against it), it would be defeated.

Mr. Manley and his co-panelists are aware of this dilemma. In a meeting yesterday with The Globe's editorial board, they expressed hope that their report, released on Tuesday, would prompt the Liberals and Conservatives to rise above the often vicious partisanship that has characterized the debate on Afghanistan to date.

That's a lofty ambition, considering how entrenched the Tories have been in their support for the mission's extension and the Liberals, more recently, in their opposition to it. But by crafting their report in such a way that it gives both parties an opportunity to climb down from the ledge, the authors have placed an entirely reasonable onus on Mr. Harper and Mr. Dion to show some willingness to compromise.

Mr. Manley's appointment as chair of the blue-ribbon panel was greeted with skepticism, even hostility, by many Liberals. They believed that, in choosing a former Liberal minister who had previously expressed support for the mission's extension, Mr. Harper's primary goal was to sow strife within their party. They may well have been right, given Mr. Harper's record of politicizing everything he touches.

But whatever the Prime Minister's intentions, Mr. Manley has handed the Liberals an opportunity to reposition themselves as the true internationalist party they have traditionally been.

His report does not, as many expected, simply make the case for an indefinite extension of the mission.

Instead, it makes the extension contingent not only on the assistance of other NATO countries but also on the purchase of medium–lift helicopters and unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles. And the panel has been highly critical of the government's communications strategy, reiterating yesterday that Canadians are ill served by strict controls that see information flowing only through the Defence Department and not from Foreign Affairs, officials with the Canadian International Development Agency, or ambassadors.

Mr. Dion now has the opportunity to claim some middle ground – to allow that, if the conditions and concerns of the panel are met, his party will support the mission's extension. This would require a substantial shift from his current position, but it would be worthwhile.

Goaded by Mr. Harper, and seeking to gain votes in the next election, the Liberals have taken a leftward swing that has placed them on simplistic pacifist turf.

But it is the Liberals, after all, who committed our troops not just to Afghanistan but specifically to the dangerous Kandahar mission.

The Liberals talk incessantly of the United Nations. This is a UN mission, perfectly consistent with their principles, as Mr. Manley has reminded them.

For Mr. Harper, too, the panel's prevailing message is that it is time for a new spirit of co–operation in pursuit of better co–ordination of the mission. That applies, as the report specifies, to forging an international consensus – reaching out to our NATO partners through diplomatic negotiations, and resisting the urge to score political points by publicly chastising them for not delivering more troops. It means better co–ordinating the efforts of federal departments and agencies, and ensuring that voices other than the military's are heard. It means allowing officials to publicly communicate their efforts, and ceasing efforts to keep the media, and by extension all Canadians, in the dark on many aspects of the mission.

And however much it chagrins the Prime Minister, it means reaching out to the opposition, specifically the Liberals.

Since Mr. Harper came to office two years ago, his instincts have consistently favoured politics over statesmanship. Instead of seeking the Liberals' continued support for the mission they launched, he tried to make Afghanistan a wedge issue. In May of 2006, instead of allowing a proper discussion of the mission's future, he rushed through a pre– mature vote to extend it – a vote seemingly designed to catch a divided Liberal Party off guard and to force it into hasty opposition.

Since then, he has intensified the rhetoric, seizing on Liberal criticism of the war effort to accuse his rivals of seeking to "cut and run" and even implying that they are sympathetic to the Taliban.

The result, not surprisingly, is that the Liberals have got their backs up, and there is little doubt those backs will remain up if Mr. Harper does not change his tone.

It is healthy for the government and the opposition to have differences of opinion, even in times of war. But these must be substantial differences; on matters this serious, the parties should be expected to set aside partisan squabbles for the greater good. With the Bucharest summit looming, and with Mr.

Manley's panel having set the stage, it is time for the leaders of Canada's two biggest parties to meet on the bridge Mr. Manley's panel has constructed.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: defence; foreign policy; strife; political

PERSONAL NAME: John Manley; Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada

THE AFGHAN MISSION: THE INDEPENDENT PANEL

Combat role won't exceed 10 years, Manley says The sooner NATO allies commit more troops the sooner Canadian Forces can leave bloody Kandahar region

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BYLINE: MICHAEL VALPY

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Toronto ONT

WORDS: 1156

WORD COUNT: 1212

MICHAEL VALPY TORONTO Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan will be over in less than 10 years and the sooner the government can press its NATO allies into committing more troops the sooner it can exit the bloody Kandahar battlefield, members of the Afghanistan review panel said yesterday.

The panel members said their report offers Prime Minister Stephen Harper leverage when he meets with NATO heads of government in Romania in April to prod them into sending in 1,000 more soldiers to the southern province of Kandahar, where Canada now has the lead security role.

But if he can't get a commitment in Romania, the Canadians could be out as early as August, 2009, John Manley, chair of the independent panel appointed by Mr. Harper in October, told The Globe and Mail's editorial board.

"If this [the additional deployment] can't be managed, NATO has a really, really serious problem." He said that without more troops, the Canadian mission in Kandahar is in jeopardy and, despite all the valid reasons for Canada being in Afghanistan, "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.'" Mr. Manley and fellow panel members Derek Burney, a former ambassador to Washington, and Pamela Wallin, a broadcaster and former consul-general in New York, said they did not think it would be justifiable for Canada to announce it was unilaterally transferring its Kandahar responsibility by February, 2009, the current limit set by Parliament to the Canadian mission.

"As experts have told us," Mr. Manley said, "Canada can't win this [conflict] alone but it's not impossible that we can cause it to be lost alone. So we don't think we should be jamming NATO in an impossible situation." But the panel members said it would be reasonable to give Canada's NATO allies a year's notice – if extra troops weren't forthcoming – that it would leave Kandahar when its next six-month troop rotation ended in August, 2009.

Moreover, they made clear that the climate is right for Canada to exercise diplomatic leverage to hand off responsibility for Kandahar – they were adamant on using the word "leverage" as opposed to "blackmail" or "playing chicken" – and they indicated they were counting strongly, although not exclusively, on the Americans to satisfy the 1,000-soldier requirement.

THE AFGHAN MISSION: THE INDEPENDENT PANEL Combat role won't exceed 10 years, Manley says

"There's quite a difference between threats and blackmail and saying we're prepared to stay," Mr. Manley said. "If the government accepts our advice, we'll stay. We're not drawing down troops, [there's] no caveats, no time limit to do the job, but we need a partner.

We're saying . . . let's make sure this is winnable." Mr. Burney said there was a growing consensus among the Europeans and the Americans that "the greatest deficiency in Afghanistan today is the lack of force, the lack of troops.

"We're hoping the Bucharest summit will respond in some fashion to the need for a more comprehensive strategy from NATO for Afghanistan which in turn should elevate the attention level of some of the strap-hangers [a reference to NATO members that have refused to commit troops to Afghanistan's flashpoint areas].

"The Americans have been preoccupied with Iraq to the detriment of Afghanistan but that is changing. That is changing very rapidly, not only within the Bush administration but more importantly with all the [major] candidates in the presidential election. That's another reason why we think the condition is not unreasonable." The Americans have announced a seven-month deployment of marines to Afghanistan. Members of the Manley panel are hoping that at least half the deployment – or "surge" – will be committed to the NATO mission in southern Afghanistan and that the commitment will be for much longer than seven months.

Canadian troops are intensely engaged in training the Afghan National Army to assume permanent responsibility for security in Kandahar and elsewhere in the country. The exercise is going well, panel members said. The Afghan army is recruiting 2,000 members a month; they're being paid; they're serving in all parts of the country, which is strengthening Afghanistan's sense of itself as a nation.

"The addition of another battle group [in Kandahar] would allow us to train faster," Ms. Wallin said.

Added Mr. Manley, "The faster we get additional resources, the quicker the exit ability." Reminded that General Rick Hillier, Chief of the Defence Staff, said late last year that Canada would be in Afghanistan for a decade, Mr. Manley replied: "We'll be out much sooner than that. Much sooner than a decade." In their own words John Manley "We're not going to have a V-E day here with parades in the street." – On the subject of a clear end to the fighting "If Canadians really don't want to do this, well then that is something that has to be respected. But in the past, Canadians have shown a willingness to do things that were difficult and required sacrifice and were challenging. But you can't feed them news about young men and women dying without putting it in a context in which they can say this is why and this is meaningful and this is tragic but it's worth it." "As far as we can tell, there's something in the centre, or it's PMO or PCO, that has decided that the messaging has to be very carefully controlled. It isn't helpful. It means that many of the reporters in the field are therefore reduced to staying on Kandahar airfield.

They report on military operations as they're disclosed to them and the inevitable IED explosions and the aftermath of that. It means there isn't a balanced view coming out of official sources of all aspects of the mission." Derek Burney "I think the correct word to use is leverage. It's not blackmail.

It's not playing chicken. We're trying to increase the government's leverage with NATO. That's what it's about, because the most important finding in our study, no matter which source you talk to, is that the greatest deficiency in Afghanistan today is the lack of force, the lack of troops. The mission is under-resourced." "There's a genuine thirst for information among Canadians. They support the troops almost by instinct. But they're confused about the mission because they hear different stories about what it's there for, what it's doing." Pamela Wallin "When there's a known bad guy living in a compound, Canadian Forces do a surgical strike. They slip into the compound and take him out.

The Americans, on the other hand, are more inclined to bomb the compound and accept so-called collateral

damage – unintentional civilian deaths." – Offering one of the reasons Canadian soldiers have detainee problems

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; defence; strife; political; statements; text

PERSONAL NAME: John Manley; Derek Burney; Pamela Wallin

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

THE AFGHAN MISSION PM's gag order erodes support, Manley says

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BYLINE: MICHAEL VALPY

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 787

WORD COUNT: 809

MICHAEL VALPY The government's decision to gag Foreign Affairs and other departments from speaking to the media has left Canadians with a flawed understanding of what the Afghan mission is about, members of the panel reviewing Canada's role in Afghanistan charged yesterday.

The panel members called the policy unhelpful and said it was undermining public support for the mission and presenting a skewed picture of why Canadian troops are being asked to put their lives on the line in Afghanistan.

Chairman John Manley, a former foreign affairs minister, said the decision taken at the "centre" – in the Prime Minister's Office or the Privy Council Office – to allow only the Defence Department to speak on the mission means Canadians are being told their young men and women are dying without being given "any context in which they can say this is why and this is meaningful and this is tragic but it's worth it." "In Kosovo [where Canada was part of a NATO intervention in 1999], media had regular and frequent briefings on the record from officials in Foreign Affairs and Defence," Mr. Manley said at a meeting with The Globe and Mail's editorial board.

"What we're finding in this conflict is that virtually all your information is coming from Defence. Neither Foreign Affairs nor CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] nor other government departments that are involved are able to give on the record briefings." Journalists have been aware of the silence that has shrouded Foreign Affairs since Stephen Harper's government took office in February, 2006, but this is the first time an official body has reported on it. The Afghanistan panel was established by Mr. Harper in late 2007.

The muzzling of Foreign Affairs and other departments has led to Canadians being confused about the mission, said panel member Derek Burney, a former ambassador to Washington.

"They support the troops almost by instinct . . . [but] they hear different stories about what [the mission] is there for, what it's doing. Lots of Canadians are saying 'Please, just tell us what it is we're doing, why we're there.'" Mr. Burney, whose reputation for bluntness has accompanied him throughout his diplomatic career, talked about too many people in official Ottawa trying to pull the wool over the public's eyes by presenting the Afghan mission from their own points of view.

"If it's a political thing in Parliament it goes one way," he said. "If it's a military thing it goes another way. All we're saying is that it's bigger than the military. There's a lot more involved than the military." It was his "fervent wish," he said, that some of Canada's ambassadors would have more flexibility in being able to

speak.

"It was certainly the case in my day that ambassadors were allowed to speak to the media . . . and I would like to see our distinguished ambassadors – the one to NATO, the one in Kabul, the one in Washington, the one in London, I could go on – having greater latitude to express the government's total position in a place like Afghanistan.

"There are problems with governance. There are problems with development.

There's a lack of international co-ordination which is abysmal, from the UN, from NATO.

"These are real problems that need to be addressed, and we think as a panel that Canada has a right and a credible voice to exercise in addressing those kinds of problems in a way that we don't have in a lot of issues that we like to dabble in around the world without any interest or contribution." Mr. Manley, Mr. Burney and Pamela Wallin, a broadcaster and former consul-general in New York, cited the salacious story of the Corrections Canada officials' boots as an example of what can go awry when Foreign Affairs is muzzled.

According to government documents released in November, Corrections Canada officials inspecting Afghan jails asked for special boots because they were walking through blood and fecal material – the implication being that detainees handed over by the Canadian military to Afghan jailers were treated in a horrid manner.

What the Afghan panel members learned in private meetings with Foreign Affairs officials – and which the officials were barred from explaining to journalists – was that the blood and fecal material could be explained by a combination of inadvertent food poisoning and a blocked sewage system.

"I'm not opposed to a more controlled message," said Mr. Burney, "but it's got to be a more complete message. And it's not going to be complete if one department has the latitude to speak openly but others don't. It's as simple as that."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; defence; strife; government; media; freedom of information; political; statements

PERSONAL NAME: John Manley; Derek Burney

'THERE'S SOME CLIMB-DOWN SPACE' Report offers Liberals, Tories room to compromise, panel members say

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EDITION: National

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 699

WORD COUNT: 655

CAMPBELL CLARK OTTAWA Members of the panel that proposed extending Canada's mission in Afghanistan if several conditions are met say their report gives the Liberals and Conservatives a way to bridge their entrenched political positions.

The Liberals, who have called for Canada to end its combat mission in Kandahar next year, will be the linchpin to deciding the issue in Parliament, because both the Bloc Quebecois and the NDP categorically back withdrawal.

Stephane Dion's party insists it will not give a full response until after Prime Minister Stephen Harper charts his own course, and government sources said they do not expect to develop a formal position until early next week.

The Liberal caucus is divided, with some MPs insisting the party should stick to its call for Canada to leave the Kandahar mission in February, 2009, and others believing the panel's report offers room for a compromise.

Members of the panel led by former Liberal foreign affairs minister John Manley said they believe the report gave neither the government nor the Liberals complete support – but that it offered both a way to move toward change.

"We laboured as best we could to try to get the thing above the partisan positions that everybody had taken. So we don't think our solution is necessarily the one the government wanted; we don't think it fits what the Liberals were proposing," panel member Derek Burney told The Globe and Mail's editorial board.

"... We thought by being realistic in our assessment and being quite critical of the way things have been done, we were providing room for a consensus, a different consensus." The Liberals have not fixed a course – and there are differences between doves in the caucus and relative hawks like deputy leader Michael Ignatieff, who is seen as more willing to reach some kind of compromise to extend the mission.

Mr. Harper has yet to say whether he embraces the Manley panel's recommendations, and even if he were to, experts say much depends on the details of the government's proposal to put them into practice.

Yesterday, Mr. Dion gave no indication that he will shift positions.

'THERE'S SOME CLIMB-DOWN SPACE' Report offers Liberals, Tories room to compromise, panel members say

"I think what is good with the Manley report is that we have the opportunity to have a debate. Is it 1,000 more troops that may help us? Really? From which country? What would they do? We will see what the government will do with this report," he said in an interview on Toronto radio station CFRB.

He agreed that the report does not vindicate either the Liberal or Conservative position, and noted that it states that government co-ordination of the mission is poor, and that Canada should pull out if NATO does not commit 1,000 more troops to Kandahar.

But he insisted that NATO must preserve the "rotation principle" or member countries will not take on such missions, and that Mr.

Harper should have long ago notified the alliance it would leave next year, when the current mandate ends.

"He said Canada will stay as long [as necessary], so the other countries have said, 'Oh, if that's the case, Canada will carry this most dangerous combat mission forever.' We didn't have a debate about that in Canada," Mr. Dion said.

Privately, however, some Liberal MPs say they see room for compromise if Mr. Harper adds further restrictions to those Mr. Manley has recommended, like a timeline for a later NATO rotation in Kandahar, and a tighter definition of how the mission will change to a training focus after February, 2009.

"Ironically, Manley's report gives both Harper and us a bit of wiggle room," said one Liberal MP. "Harper has to commit to not writing a blank cheque. . . . I think there's some climb-down space." But many other Liberal MPs believe that the party has been given no reason to change its stand.

Ajax-Pickering MP Mark Holland said the party's position has been that Canada's combat role should end in 2009 and Canada's efforts should move to rebuilding Afghanistan's institutions and legitimizing its economy. "I expect that our position will remain the same," he said.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; defence; strife; political; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Stephane Dion; Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada

'THERE'S SOME CLIMB-DOWN SPACE' Report offers Liberals, Tories room to compromise, panel members say

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 080250129

DATE: 2008.01.24

PAGE: A16

BYLINE: CAMPBELL CLARK

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 683

WORD COUNT: 637

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Stephane Dion's party insists it will not give a full response until after Prime Minister Stephen Harper charts his own course, and government sources said they do not expect to develop a formal position until early next week.

Mr. Harper has given the report a warm initial reception, a government source said yesterday. He called it "a good and positive report" even though it criticized the Conservative government's handling of the issue.

"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source told The Globe and Mail.

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GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; defence; strife; political; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Stephane Dion; Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada

Secret policy exposed

SOURCETAG 0801240447
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 19
BYLINE: CP
WORD COUNT: 430

In a secret policy shift almost three months ago, the Canadian government stopped transferring Afghan prisoners to local authorities upon witnessing evidence of torture, according to a bombshell letter.

The revelation comes a year after the Conservative government ridiculed its opponents for raising torture allegations and Prime Minister Stephen Harper accused them of being pro-Taliban.

The abrupt shift was divulged in a letter submitted this week by federal lawyers to a pair of human rights organizations that have launched a case in Federal Court.

A prisoner told Canadian officials he'd been beaten unconscious, whipped with electrical cables, belted with a rubber hose, and he told the Canadians exactly where they could find the torture instruments.

After showing them a bruise, he led the Canadians to his prison cell where they discovered the hose and cable under a chair.

That Nov. 5 account is one of numerous allegations of torture included in government documents filed in advance of a Federal Court appearance Thursday. Another one describes electrocution.

Civil libertarians and opposition parties have warned that Canada could be violating the Geneva conventions by turning over captives to Afghan authorities with the knowledge they could be tortured.

GOVERNMENT SUED

Amnesty International and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association have sued Ottawa in an effort to block further transfers — and the resulting court documents are the only reason Canada's policy shift has come to light.

When Amnesty International pressed for details about the Nov. 5 incident, government lawyer J. Sanderson Graham sent the group a letter this week explaining what happened next.

Graham said Canadian authorities were informed of "a credible allegation of mistreatment " during that visit with prisoners in an Afghan detention facility.

"As a consequence, there have been no transfers of detainees to Afghan authorities since that date," said Graham's letter.

"The allegation is under investigation by the Afghan authorities. Canada will resume transferring detainees when it believes it can do so in accordance with its international legal obligations."

A spokeswoman for the prime minister had little to say about the policy shift, except to note that it stemmed from an agreement between the Canadian and Afghan governments to monitor detainees.

Amnesty International expressed disgust at the government's handling of the file.

First Conservatives mocked people who raised concerns about torture, then they fought them in court, and finally they changed their policy months ago and kept it secret from the public, Amnesty notes.

All this while a public debate raged about Canada's future role in Afghanistan and a blue-ribbon panel spent three months preparing a study meant to guide the debate.

The panel led by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley had already criticized the government for being too secretive and of sugar-coating the realities of the Afghan mission.

FRANK TALK

Manley said that Canadians were mature enough for a frank talk from their federal government and that they deserved one.

"It's very disheartening and disturbing," said Alex Neve, the head of Amnesty's Canadian section.

"It's troubling to think the government felt it was not necessary or appropriate to share that decision with Canadians. It's only come out now, and very reluctantly.

"We've seen so much denial and political posturing over this issue for many months now," he said.

"We should have clarity, accountability and transparency." KEYWORDS=NATIONAL; WORLD

Poppy politics Opium trade threatens to undermine effort in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0801240439
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 15
BYLINE: GREG WESTON
COLUMN: National Affairs
WORD COUNT: 448

John Manley's otherwise brutally frank assessment of the dismal situation facing Canada and other countries fighting in Afghanistan, curiously glosses over one of the most serious and intractable enemies of the entire effort: Opium.

This week's controversial report by a panel of experts headed by the former Liberal cabinet minister acknowledges only that "the opium trade is a complicating factor in Afghan security, and it is both a result of violent instability and a contributor to it.

"Opium profits flow to the Taliban, to criminal elements and to corrupt government officials," the Manley report notes. "Coherent counter-narcotics strategies need to be adopted by all relevant agencies."

Talk about a problem understated, and a solution easier said than done.

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Writing in the Washington Post this week, former U.S. ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, calls the Afghan narcotics trade "probably the largest single-country drug production since 19th-century China."

Afghan government officials, he says, "including some with close ties to the presidency," are protecting the drug trade and profiting from it."

In financial terms, Holbrooke estimates the Afghan opium trade currently equals about 50% of the country's official gross domestic product.

In other words, Canadian forces are currently fighting to bring order and stability to a country in which more than a third of the entire economy is controlled by drug lords and corrupt government officials supporting the opium biz.

CASH FLOW

While it is impossible to know exactly how much drug money is financing the Taliban insurgency that is killing Canadian troops, experts agree the cash flowing from the poppy fields is more than enough to keep the war going for years, if not decades, to come.

The question is obviously, what to do about it?

Holbrooke notes the U.S. is spending about \$1 billion a year on counter-narcotics programs in Afghanistan, yet, the opium harvest in 2007 actually grew by almost 30% over the previous year to a staggering 8,200 tons.

The whole expensive U.S. effort, Holbrooke says, "may be the single most ineffective program in the history of American foreign policy.

"It's not just a waste of money. It actually strengthens the Taliban and al-Qaida, as well as criminal elements within Afghanistan."

The Manley report recommends offering "effective economic provisions to induce would-be poppy farmers and middlemen to prefer and find alternative lines of work."

But Holbrooke says the "alternative livelihoods" strategy has been tried elsewhere with no success, and is even less likely to work in Afghanistan.

"Poppies are an easy crop to grow, and are far more valuable than any other product that can be grown in the rocky, remote soil of Afghanistan.

"It will take years to create the networks of roads, markets and lucrative crops that would induce farmers to switch."

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CROP ERADICATION

But Holbrooke cautions that any such poppy-eradication programs would only create a backlash among Afghans against both the local government and Western forces, and "serve as a recruitment device for the Taliban."

Uprooting the poppy trade, he argues, will be impossible without weeding out corruption in the Afghan government and police forces.

"To be sure, breaking the narco-state in Afghanistan is essential, or all else will fail," Holbrooke says. "But it will take years."

Something to consider in the coming debate over the Manley report, and how long Canadian troops should remain in Afghanistan.

Editorial Cartoon

SOURCETAG 0801240433

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2008.01.24

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Editorial/Opinion

PAGE: 14

ILLUSTRATION: photo by TAB A woman points to a very long ribbon pinned to her shirt to a man and says: "THE 'SUPPORT OUR TROOPS' RIBBON..." Then she points to the rest of the ribbon and says: "...AND THE JOHN MANLEY EXTENSION."

WORD COUNT: 0

Poppy politics The opium trade threatens to undermine the effort in Afghanistan.

SOURCETAG 0801240347
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: A8
BYLINE: GREG WESTON
WORD COUNT: 453

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Wild Art

SOURCETAG 0801240340

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2008.01.24

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Editorial/Opinion

PAGE: A8

ILLUSTRATION: drawing by TAB A woman points out a ribbon she is wearing to a man and says "THE 'SUPPORT OUR TROOPS' RIBBON...AND THE JOHN MANLEY EXTENSION".

WORD COUNT: 0

Poppy politics Opium trade threatens to undermine effort in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0801240609
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 11
BYLINE: GREG WESTON, NATIONAL AFFAIRS
WORD COUNT: 448

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Editorial Cartoon

SOURCETAG 0801240606

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2008.01.24

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Editorial/Opinion

PAGE: 10

ILLUSTRATION: colour drawing by TAB A woman is with her husband and she is pointing at a long yellow ribbon that is pinned to her chest and trailing on the floor and she says, "THE "SUPPORT OUR TROOPS" RIBBON..." and "...AND THE JOHN MANLEY EXTENSION."

WORD COUNT: 0

Poppy politics Opium trade threatens to undermine effort in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0801240835
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 15
BYLINE: GREG WESTON
COLUMN: National Affairs
WORD COUNT: 450

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Editorial Cartoon

SOURCETAG 0801240831

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2008.01.24

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Editorial/Opinion

PAGE: 14

ILLUSTRATION: colour drawing by TAB A woman speaks to the man next to her, a long yellow ribbon on her dress and says, "THE "SUPPORT OUR TROOPS RIBBON... AND THE JOHN MANLEY EXTENSION."

WORD COUNT: 0

Canada is losing this war; where are our allies?

IDNUMBER 200801240050
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Comment
PAGE: A10
COLUMN: Don Martin
BYLINE: Don Martin
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 655

The mission is a mess. In a devastatingly frank assessment reflecting the sad reality of military forces in Kandahar, an independent panel says Canada's losing battle against the Taliban demands a desperate measure.

It suggests a form of diplomatic blackmail against the 39-nation international security force guiding the ailing Afghanistan mission: Bail us out with another 1,000 fighting soldiers or we're bailing out of the conflict.

That contentious bottom line is not what Prime Minister Stephen Harper had in mind when he summoned former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley to consider four options for Canada's future role in the conflict.

None of the above, declared the five-member Manley panel after digesting 200 submissions and taking a tour of Afghanistan. They found Canada's too-few combat troops are ill-equipped, poorly co-ordinated and losing ground to the enemy while failing to deliver adequate humanitarian aid or reconstruction help to average Afghans.

That ugly scenario has been poorly communicated to voters back home by governments that haven't shown prime ministerial leadership on the file, Manley argues.

Well, ouch. No wonder Harper stayed mum on the recommendations until he could figure out a decent public-relations strategy. But the key push is that put-up-or-shut-up ultimatum.

It will either work spectacularly well if Harper can miraculously lever more soldiers from reluctant NATO partners or send Canada home in a sulk before the job is done. Retreating under those circumstances doesn't fit Harper's hawkish style and would trigger an uproar in a military that would consider its 77-plus soldier lives sacrificed in vain to political gamesmanship.

For a panel that declares Afghanistan a preoccupation requiring special cabinet and prime ministerial attention, it's a curious inconsistency to suggest Canada hold a white flag behind its back for diplomatic emergencies.

After all, Manley warns this is a holy grail mission of global security significance that can be terminated in 2009 only if Canada is willing to sacrifice its interests, compromise its humanitarian effort, encourage the Taliban and forever black-eye Canada before the United Nations and NATO. But diplomatic arm-twisting has failed so miserably to date, there's probably no harm in attempting to bluff that coalition of the chickens in relatively safe northern Afghanistan to move some of their troops south into danger.

Win or lose under the raised–stakes plan, any motion derived from this panel's report is far from assured safe parliamentary passage. The New Democrats and Bloc Québécois have made their opposition to an extended mission very clear.

And it will be a difficult swallow for Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion, who wants Canada out of harm's way in 2009, to support a report that fails to define the winning conditions for any withdrawal at some unspecified future date.

If Dion stands against the mission extension in April and the prime minister declares it a confidence vote, an election disguised as an Afghanistan referendum would be foisted on Canadians this spring. But the greater value of the report is to paint the government–suppressed Afghanistan picture that embedded reporters and non–government aid agencies have seen for themselves in recent years.

There is no doubt Canadian soldiers are fiercely loyal to the mission, but lacking essential equipment. There is a sense of helplessness for troops waiting for other nations' helicopters to pick up their injured and deliver supplies.

Canada does not have any lift capacity of its own in the war, something the panel wants fixed. Soldiers in reconstruction units tend to be deployed haphazardly in heavily armed convoys. The panel says civilians would be more effective, friendly faced, good–deed–doers.

Canada's \$100 million in annual aid is delivered ad hoc by workers kept inside military bases until allowed outside by timid Ottawa bureaucrats, the panel says.

The panel concludes Kandahar is not yet a write–off for Canadian forces, but warns it will be mission impossible if done in half measures. The fact stands that Canada is losing its war in Afghanistan. It's high time other nations measured up as worthy allies against global terrorism— without being blackmailed by our bluff.

dmartin@canwest.com

One Canadian dies, two are wounded in roadside blast

IDNUMBER 200801240044
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD,
Afghanistan
BYLINE: Brian Hutchinson
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 266

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — One Canadian soldier was killed and two were injured early yesterday afternoon when the light armoured vehicle in which they were riding was struck by an improvised explosive device.

The soldiers were engaged in a road-clearing exercise about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar city, in the western reaches of Panjwaii district, Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche told reporters here this morning, local time.

The death brings to 78 the number of Canadian soldiers killed there since 2002.

No names were released with the announcement. Families were contacted earlier today.

Laroche said the area in which the Canadians were operating is a known trouble spot that is larded with IEDs. The Canadians were part of a team attempting to locate and remove IEDs in the area.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have since been released from hospital, military officials told a news conference early today.

It has been a tough month so far for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30. On that date, Gunner Jonathan Dion was killed by a roadside bomb. One week later, on Jan. 6, Warrant Officer Hani Massouh and Cpl. éric Labbé died in a vehicle rollover.

And last week, on Jan. 15, another roadside bomb was the cause of death for the 77th soldier killed in Afghanistan, Trooper Richard Renaud. A funeral for the 26-year-old is scheduled for Saturday in Quebec.

Yesterday's death comes after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's future role in Afghanistan, published its report on Tuesday.

The five-person panel is critical of how the aid and development angle of the mission is unfolding and of how the federal government is communicating with Canadians about the mission.

Harper gives early approval to Manley report

IDNUMBER 200801240043
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Nathan Denette, Canwest News Service / John Manley defends his panel's report during a visit yesterday with the National Post editorial board. The report recommends that Canada extend its commitment beyond February 2009, but only if two conditions are met: that NATO provides at least 1,000 more soldiers to help the 2,500 Canadian troops with security in the Kandahar region and that the Canadian government gets better equipment, transport helicopters specifically, for soldiers. ;

SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 96

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given his preliminary approval to the hard-hitting report on Afghanistan by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, Canwest News Service has learned.

But Harper still wants to consult with his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said yesterday.

Harper views the findings of the five-member independent panel headed by Manley as "a good and positive report" despite the fact it was critical of the Conservative government's handling of the Afghanistan file.

"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source told Canwest.

Manley report ignores the small matter of the Afghanistan opium trade; Criminalization 100 years ago created an insoluble dilemma

IDNUMBER 200801240039
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A16
COLUMN: Dan Gardner
KEYWORDS: DRUGS; FARMERS & FARMING; WORLD WAR I; VETERANS; BOTANY
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Dan Gardner
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 1011

OTTAWA – So it's official. Afghanistan's vast fields of opium poppy will soon be entirely wiped out. No more opium and heroin. Just melons and happy farmers, as far as the eye can see.

Granted, the reader may have heard otherwise. The latest opium crop was the biggest ever, the headlines reported. Ninety per cent of the world's heroin supply comes from Afghanistan. Top officials from NATO commanders to President Hamid Karzai have said the illicit drug trade is so enormous and corrosive that it is a bigger threat to the future of Afghanistan than the Taliban.

But that can't be true. Just look at the report of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan.

Released Tuesday, the report acknowledges that opium poppy is "a complicating factor." But in its 94 pages, it devotes precisely one paragraph to the issue.

One can only conclude that John Manley's esteemed panel believes the drug trade isn't a terribly important part of the equation in Afghanistan. But no rational person could possibly believe this — unless the trade has vanished like the morning dew. So that must be the case.

Amazingly, this stunning victory in the war on drugs was predicted. In fact, it is right on schedule. In 1998, the United Nations convened a massive special session at which all the nations of the world committed to "eliminating or significantly reducing the illicit cultivation of the coca bush, the cannabis plant, and the opium poppy by the year 2008." Well, 2008 just started and the drug trade has been wiped out.

Happy new year.

OK, that's one way to explain the startling lack of attention given to the opium trade by the Manley report. Here's another:

Those who wish to bring peace and development to Afghanistan face an insoluble dilemma. On the one hand, the poppy industry is the country's largest. Afghanistan may be horribly poor now, but removing the income generated by the poppy industry would make vast numbers of very poor people very much poorer. This is why

most NATO officers are adamantly opposed to taking aggressive action against poppy production: It would drive every small farmer, field hand and trader into the waiting arms of the insurgents.

It would also be futile. Any reduction in the poppy crop would cause prices to rise along the entire supply chain — from farm field to street retailer. Rising prices would draw farmers and traffickers back into the trade.

The tempting conclusion is that we should simply turn a blind eye. But that's not an option, either. The money the Taliban make "taxing" farmers and traffickers pays for wages, weapons and bombs. And the industry is a fountainhead of corruption — corruption which makes improved governance and development difficult or impossible.

"Military victories will count for little unless the Afghan government, with the help of others, can improve governance and provide better living conditions for the Afghan people," the Manley report correctly noted. But how can the Afghan government do that? It's impossible if it doesn't tackle the opium industry. And if it does, the government will turn the people against it.

It's a heck of a dilemma. What's the Manley report got to say about it?

Nothing, really. "Coherent counter-

narcotics strategies need to be adopted by all relevant authorities," it says without noting what those mysterious strategies might be.

There should also be "effective economic provisions to induce would-be poppy farmers and middlemen to prefer and find alternative lines of work." The report adds that "a limited poppy-for-medicine project might be worth pursuing."

The objections to these progressive-sounding ideas are obvious. First, the profitability gap between poppy and legal crops is enormous, so economic incentives to encourage farmers and middlemen to switch would have to be equally enormous. Experience elsewhere suggests they usually aren't big enough to do the job. But even if they are, they are self-defeating: If farmers start abandoning poppy in substantial numbers, poppy prices will rise and those rising prices will eventually drag farmers right back in.

Poppy-for-medicine is a mistake for the same reason: If substantial quantities of poppy are diverted from the illegal trade to the legal market, prices for black-market poppy will rise and illegal production will respond accordingly. The laws of economics will not be denied.

So how does the Manley report respond to these objections? It doesn't. It avoids serious discussion of the opium problem and in that way it dodges the dilemma at the very heart of the matter.

To use a hackneyed phrase, the Manley report is inside-the-box thinking. Here, the box is the criminalization of opium poppy.

It was criminalization that turned a crop that has been grown peacefully in central Asia since time immemorial into a source of instability and corruption. It was criminalization that helped create the dilemma Afghanistan finds itself in now.

But the Manley report doesn't consider that criminalization is a policy choice made almost a century ago by foolish people who had no idea what hell they were unleashing. It treats criminalization as a law of nature, like gravity — something that has always existed and always will. And that's even more foolish than the decision to criminalize in the first place.

Manley report ignores the small matter of the Afghanistan opium trade; Criminalization 100 years ago create

We choose our drug policies. And the choice of criminalization has created an insoluble dilemma in Afghanistan -- a dilemma that is killing Canadian soldiers.

There are alternatives. Remember the 2008 deadline for wiping out the global drug trade? This year, the UN will review the experience of the last decade and discuss the way forward. Of course, the UN will never admit its policies have failed spectacularly. In fact, it now claims that the goal set in 1998 was not "eliminating or significantly reducing" production, but rather to achieve "significant and measurable results" in drug control.

The Manley report could have identified the Afghan dilemma squarely. It could have shown how international drug policy helped create that dilemma. It could have called on the Canadian government to work with European governments and others disenchanted with the war on drugs to turn the UN's 2008 review into a serious re-examination of drug policy from top to bottom.

It could have challenged us all to think.

But it didn't. It just hunkered down in that damned old box and closed the lid.

Dan Gardner writes for the Ottawa Citizen

Harper finds lots to like in Manley's report; PM has 'no illusions' on Afghanistan mission

IDNUMBER 200801240016
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: National Post; CanWest News Service / Jake Epp, left, John Manley, centre, and Derek Burney discuss the ongoing issue of Canada's role in Afghanistan on Wednesday ;
KEYWORDS: PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen; Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 422

OTTAWA – Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given his preliminary approval to the hard-hitting report on Afghanistan by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, Canwest News Service has learned.

But Harper still wants to consult with his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said Wednesday.

Harper views the findings of the five-member independent panel headed by Manley as "a good and positive report" despite the fact it was critical of the Conservative government's handling of the Afghanistan file.

"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source said.

Harper is grateful to Manley and his panel for their work, the source added.

Harper will discuss the report's recommendations at a cabinet meeting later this week. The prime minister is not expected to spend much time talking about Afghanistan at a speech scheduled for Friday in Ottawa.

"It's really going to set the direction and tone for the government for the second session," the source said of the speech, stressing that the prime minister is "not looking to drag out a response."

With the House of Commons due to reconvene Monday, Harper's speech on Friday had been planned before Manley bumped up the release of his report.

Harper's speech, in addition to laying out priorities for the next parliamentary session, was also intended to mark Wednesday's second anniversary of the Conservatives' federal election win.

The Manley report criticized the Harper government for not adequately explaining the importance of the military mission in Afghanistan directly to Canadians.

Manley urged Harper to "step up" and personally take the lead in a new diplomatic offensive to push NATO allies to provide at least 1,000 additional troops for southern Afghanistan so that Canadian troops there could

focus more on training the Afghan army.

The report also suggested that Harper might want to delay his promised vote in the Commons until after the NATO leaders summit in Bucharest in April.

Manley and his fellow panellists wanted to strengthen Harper's negotiating position going into the NATO summit. With the Liberals, Bloc Quebecois and NDP all calling for Canada to end combat operations by February 2009, it would appear likely that the Conservatives would lose a vote in the Commons on extending the mission.

The source said Harper has not yet decided whether to adopt the recommendation to delay the vote.

Stanley Kober, a foreign policy scholar with Washington's Cato Institute, said NATO's divisions now run so deep that the fractures may be irreparable.

As a Cold War creation, the organization showed great solidarity in the face of threat posed by the Soviet Union, he said. But it has floundered badly in the post-Cold War era, especially in Afghanistan.

"The glue that holds it together -- you don't have the same sort of feeling that you had back in the Cold War days," Kober said Wednesday.

78th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan; Two others are wounded while attempting to find and clear explosives

IDNUMBER 200801240013
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final C
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
KEYWORDS: FOREIGN AID; WAR; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Brian Hutchinson
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 333

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — One Canadian soldier was killed and two were injured early Wednesday afternoon when the light armoured vehicle in which they were riding was blasted by an improvised explosive device.

The soldiers were engaged in road-clearing about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City, in the western reaches of Panjwaii district, Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche told reporters here this morning, local time.

At the request of the family, the name of the fallen soldier was not immediately released.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have since been released from hospital, according to Laroche.

The soldier is the 78th member of Canada's Armed Forces to die in Afghanistan since the Canadian military deployed here in early 2002.

Laroche said the area in which the Canadians were operating is a known trouble spot that is larded with IEDs.

On Jan. 19, he added, five members of an Afghan family were killed and three were injured by such a device. The Canadians were part of a team attempting to locate and remove IEDs in the area.

"We are making the area more secure, more secure for us and more secure for Afghans, because the Taliban don't make the difference," said Laroche, commander of Canada's military forces in Afghanistan.

It has been a tough month so far for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30. On that date, Gunner Jonathan Dion was killed by a roadside bomb. One week later, on Jan. 6, Warrant Officer Hani Massouh and Cpl. Eric Labbe died in a vehicle rollover.

And last week, on Jan. 15, another roadside bomb was the cause of death for the 77th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan, Trooper Richard Renaud. A funeral for the 26-year-old is scheduled for this Saturday in Quebec.

The latest death comes one day after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's role in Afghanistan, released its report.

The Manley report recommends Canada extend its commitment beyond February 2009 but only if two conditions are met — that NATO provides at least 1,000 more soldiers to help the 2,500 Canadian troops fighting in the Kandahar region and that the Canadian government get better equipment, transport helicopters specifically, for soldiers.

Hard truths

IDNUMBER 200801240041
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A14
BYLINE: Robert Howard
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2008 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 467

Every Canadian should have a passionate position on this country's mission in Afghanistan. And many Canadians have had — and continue to have — agonizing conflict, even doubt, about that position.

Are we making a difference? Is this a "war" that can be "won"?

How do we talk about whether the cost of Canada's role in Afghanistan is too great when we're not even sure what it is we are trying to buy?

The thoughtful Roy MacGregor wrote this week in The Globe and Mail that "... a vast number of Canadians are simply not sure what they think, their opinions swirling these days like loose snow over fields."

There is some clarity — and reassurance — to be found in the report of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan, chaired by John Manley. It panders to neither the Conservatives who commissioned it, nor the Liberal party Manley sought not so long ago to lead.

Manley and his panel tell us that Canada's mission is measurably worthwhile, that Afghanistan and its people are better off for Canada's presence there, and that for Canada to pull its military mission in February 2009 has no "operational logic" and would, in fact, "squander our investment and dishonour our sacrifice to date."

That part of the Manley report articulates the thoughts of many Canadians who abhor the thought of abandoning Afghanistan's people to the mercies of the Taliban and the warlords and the drug barons and who hope that the 77 military fatalities so far are in some way worthwhile.

The balance in the report is its demand that Canada's mission in Afghanistan should not continue past Parliament's 2009 deadline without at least 1,000 more troops in Kandahar from NATO partners and without helicopters to carry troops above the roadside bombs that have caused most of Canada's fatalities there.

The report goes beyond merely calling for more NATO involvement. It sets a target (the 1,000 NATO troops) and a strategy: That Prime Minister Stephen Harper must personally work behind the scenes — particularly at a NATO summit in Romania in April — to make that happen.

The report is balanced — and smart. Canada would no longer be demanding NATO allies replace it in southern Afghanistan, but that they bolster our presence there. The corollary is that lacking that support,

Canada will not continue a mission that cannot succeed without it.

Manley says Canada is making a difference to the lives of Afghan citizens and can continue to do so — and give breathing room for the development of a stable central government in Kabul.

Winning in Afghanistan is not going to be quantified on the battlefield but measured in stability and economic development for the country and education, security and opportunity for its citizens.

Opinion polls have shown most Canadians want troops home from Afghanistan in 2009. Manley, rightly, says Canadians need to know more about the mission. His report is a place to start.

The full text can be found at http://canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/cip-pic/afghanistan/pdf/Afghan_Report_web_e.pdf

No one wants to help

IDNUMBER 200801240040
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A14
BYLINE: Thorold Marsaw, Brantford
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2008 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 304

Re: 'Manley to demand more NATO troops' (Jan. 22)

It doesn't really matter a hoot what John Manley or anyone else says. For the foreseeable future nobody — other than of course the Yanks — are going to jump in to help the Canadians in Afghanistan.

Europe is running scared. Her governments are fearful of the backlash that their not-insignificant Muslim populations might unleash if they get seriously involved.

Within months of the Madrid commuter train massacre, the Spanish government was overthrown and her troops subsequently withdrawn from the struggle. France is so troubled that huge segments of her capital are no-go zones for her own police because their very presence automatically triggers Muslim unrest. Holland, which within the decade will be a Muslim majority state, is still hanging in, I suspect out of the realization of the debt they owe to Canada due to the struggle of the Second World War. Germany doesn't want to do any serious fighting for all the obvious reasons.

Now it is being suggested that a Canadian withdrawal would not only be a surrender of Afghanistan to the Taliban, but also herald the collapse of NATO. How did we get ourselves into such a mess? It is simply because Canada has made a habit of taking on the toughest tasks and winning, albeit in this case, it's more of a striving not to lose. But we really can't point fingers. Here at home we too are treading very lightly. Have you noticed that we have heard absolutely nothing of the Canadian 17, the gang who threatened to blow up vital buildings in Toronto and Ottawa and at the same time assassinate our prime minister? In most other countries, those guys would, by this time, be serving life sentences.

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

IDNUMBER 200801240079

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2008.01.24

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: B12

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Breach of border gives Gaza residents relief; Colour Photo: Stephen Harper ; Colour Photo: Diana ; Colour Photo: Henning Bagger, Reuters / Picture of the Day: Keeper Mikkel Kibsgaard has his hands full of newly born, quadruplet Siberian tiger cubs at Aalborg Zoo, in Denmark, on Wednesday. Siberian tigers are among the world's most endangered species. ; Colour Photo: Jim Flaherty ; Colour Photo: Jarome Iginla ; Colour Photo: The G.I. Diet Clinic ; Photo: (See hard copy for description). ; Colour Photo: Heath Ledger ;

KEYWORDS: 0

BYLINE: Compiled by Heather Ryan

SOURCE: Calgary Herald

WORD COUNT: 980

Top Stories

Glitch Forces CHR to Resend Radiology Tests

The Calgary Health Region was forced to resend 40,000 copies of radiology tests after a glitch kept people's results from being delivered to doctors, some of which were delayed for as long as three months.

Page A1

New Poll Suggests Albertans Want Change

A new poll suggests nearly 46 per cent of Albertans believe it's time for a change in government. They don't, however, see an alternative to the Conservatives who have ruled Alberta for 36 years.

Page A1

Breach of Border Gives Gaza Residents Relief

Gazans broke the Israeli blockade of their coastal enclave in spectacular fashion Wednesday, using explosives to punch holes in the metal and concrete wall that had been their border with Egypt.

Page A3

News Sections -- A and B

City & Region

Catholic District Brings Back the Golden Compass

After a hiatus from library shelves, the controversial novel *The Golden Compass* is being welcomed back into Calgary Catholic School District schools. The novel was pulled two months ago as a film adaptation of the story was released in theatres.

Page B1

City Police Seize Cocaine Worth About \$2.5M

Calgary police have confiscated two dozen kilograms of cocaine worth about \$2.5 million in a bust that will cause a huge dent in the local market, police said.

Page B1

Canada

Harper Gives Thumbs-Up to Manley Report

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given his preliminary approval to the hard-hitting report on Afghanistan by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, Canwest News Service has learned.

Page A5

World

Sole Survivor of Diana's Car Crash Still Draws Blank

The sole survivor of the car crash in which Princess Diana was killed has said his only memory of what happened is hearing the princess calling out for her boyfriend Dodi Fayed. Trevor Rees, who was Fayed's personal bodyguard, said he heard a woman's voice "moaning" and saying "Dodi" as he lay semi-conscious in the wreckage of the crashed Mercedes, having suffered appalling facial injuries.

Page A2

New Yorkers Warned of Sushi Mercury Levels

New Yorkers choked on their beloved sushi Wednesday after reading that eating only six pieces of raw tuna a week could put them above government safety levels for mercury.

Page A10

North Korea Will Stay on Terror List for Now: U.S.

The United States warned Wednesday that North Korea will stay on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism until it fully discloses its nuclear activities, as promised.

Page A18

Traffic

– Right lane closure: On northbound Heritage Drive east of Glenmore Trail S.E. the right lane is closed daily between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. (except Sundays) until Feb. 5.

– Lane blocked: On southbound 1 Street between 11 Avenue and 12 Avenue S.E. the two left lanes will be blocked starting at 9 a.m., today until Friday about 3 p.m.

– Road closure: On northbound 7 Street between 11 Avenue and 12 Avenue S.W. until Friday about 4 p.m.

Commuter Weather

6 A.M. Off to Work: Mainly clear.

Temperature: –13 C

12 Noon Lunch: Mainly sunny.

Temperature: –8 C

5 P.M. Heading Home: Variably cloudy.

Temperature: –10 C

Overnight: Variably cloudy. Low: –16 C

Friday: Variably cloudy. High: –9 C Low: –19 C

Wednesday: High: 4.4 C Low: –15.3 C

Online Features

CalgaryHerald.com

News: Pentagon vetoes Guantanamo visit by UN official.

News: Montreal–area men in N.Y. court on money–laundering charges.

Sports: Odds definitely not on Oilers' side.

Sports: Bryan Murray was busy yesterday.

Quote of the Day

"In the African–American community, he's like Marvin Gaye. They love him"

South Carolinian Eric Elliott, who is black, on former U.S. president Bill Clinton. Clinton explained to citizens Wednesday why his wife, Senator Hillary Clinton, would make a fantastic U.S. president. See story,

Page A7.

Calgary Business -- E1

Markets

– TSX Composite 16.5 12657.380

- Dow Jones 298.98 12270.17
- Nasdaq 24.14 2316.41
- TSX Venture 25.59 2440.340

Oilpatch Slowdown Eases Labour Shortage

A slowdown in the Alberta oilpatch might have executives wincing and making plans to move to Saskatchewan, but for some communities across the province, it represents a welcome breather. Drilling in Alberta is expected to drop by 31 per cent this year compared with 2007.

Page E1

Canada in Good Shape to Weather Financial Storm

Canada is in better shape than any other major industrial country to weather the financial storm sweeping the globe, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said Wednesday, as North American stocks tumbled in volatile trading — after a one-day rebound — only to stage a surprising comeback.

Page E3

Editorial — A16

Landlord Loopholes

If — as Service Alberta contends — no rule was broken when a landlord chased away tenants by jacking up the rent two months after applying for a condo conversion, then the rules should be changed.

Page A16

Letter of the Day

There are no maybes when it comes to our military's positive influence on the people of Afghanistan and no maybe that we should support them. They earn our respect every day. Maybe we should start showing it!

Susan Fankhauser, Page A17

Hockey — F1

Iginla Heads Into All-Star Game Looking for a Goal

The National Hockey League all-star game is typically a Las Vegas jackpot of offence, but not for Jarome Iginla.

The Calgary Flames' standout right-winger has been to three of these mid-season extravaganzas and his side has scored a combined total of 15 goals in those games, but Iginla, one of the game's pre-eminent snipers, has come up empty-handed each time.

Page F1

GM Sutter Adds Flavour to Trade Talk

The way Darryl Sutter sees it, hockey's rumour factory is a lot like the neighbourhood ice-cream parlour. "All it is," Calgary's general manager said Wednesday afternoon, "is the flavour of the week." The latest taste is fudge ripple a la Alex Tanguay.

Page F1

Real Life -- C1

The G.I. Diet Clinic

Rick Gallop has a problem with the word "diet."

"In modern terms, that means a limited time," he said during a recent stop in Calgary.

Page C1

Conservation Area a Magnificent Retreat

Olivia Kelly loves the outdoors.

On a recent chilly Wednesday morning, the four-year-old Calgary girl was in her glory at the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area, looking for all sorts of natural wonders: animal footprints, tree branches that deer had chewed, and snowflakes of all kinds.

Page C5

Sudoku

World's Hottest Puzzle Craze

How to Play:

Complete this grid by placing the digits 1 to 9 exactly once, and only once, in each horizontal row and in each column. Also, each digit should only appear once in every 3x3 shaded or white mini-grid in the puzzle. Sudoku appears on the 5 Minute Herald page Monday to Friday and on the Saturday and Sunday puzzle pages.

Entertainment -- D1

Heath Ledger's Death Linked to Pills?

Heath Ledger, the Hollywood actor, died naked and surrounded by sleeping pills hours after asking friend to wake him the following day, it emerged on Wednesday.

Page D1

Tonight's TV Picks:

- The Limelighters: 8 p.m. on Global (Ch. 7).

It's An Odd World

Border Guards Foil Parrot Smuggling Cyclist

Border guards in Belarus said Wednesday they had foiled an attempt to smuggle 277 parrots into the ex-Soviet state — aboard a bicycle. Spokesman Alexander Tishchenko said the smuggler abandoned his bicycle and cargo — contained in six cages — and fled back over the border into Ukraine when confronted late on Tuesday.

"The cages were fixed to an ordinary bicycle. The parrots were stuffed inside like sardines, 40 to 50 to a cage," he said.

Pro-Liberal

IDNUMBER 200801240051
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Q: Queries – Quibbles – Quirks
PAGE: A17
COLUMN: Inbox: Your Space – Your Time
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: John Manley;
KEYWORDS: 0
BYLINE: Ken Erickson
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 105

Re: "Manley's report right on target," Editorial, Jan. 23.

Contrary to your editorial, the Manley report has vindicated the Liberal position on Canada's role in Afghanistan.

NATO has made it clear there are no new forces available to assist Canadian troops in Afghan-istan. As such, it is incumbent on Parliament to vote in favour of a total troop withdrawal by 2009 at the latest.

After almost six years in Afghanistan, Canada needs to shift its focus from combat to humanitarianism and diplomacy. The deaths of so many soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan only reinforces the fact that war does not bring peace.

The only thing we will gain by maintaining a combat force in Afghanistan is more flag-draped coffins returning home.

Ken Erickson,

Calgary

Our Afghan 'partners' shy away from conflict

IDNUMBER 200801240028
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
COLUMN: Calgary's Eye on National Politics
KEYWORDS: WAR; IRAQ; ARMED FORCES; UNITED STATES
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Don Martin
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 571

The Afghanistan panel is wrong: we are not alone.

There are numerous foreign partners for Canadian soldiers at their Kandahar air field headquarters.

The Romanians are there and, last I looked, preoccupied with fixing the stink from a nearby sewage lagoon called Emerald Lake. The Germans have contributed the closest thing to a real restaurant, offering welcome competition to Burger King and Pizza Hut.

Portuguese soldiers swing by forward operating bases for a sleepover occasionally, leaving behind gifts of beer and wine. And the Americans constantly make themselves heard as their howling F-16s launch at dawn from a runway beside Canadian soldiers' sleeping quarters.

There are a handful of other countries strolling the base boardwalk, but even southern regional command officials couldn't explain their responsibilities when I asked last summer.

These are not the sort of partners John Manley, the former Liberal cabinet minister who chaired a panel probing the Afghanistan conflict, was talking about when he demanded help for stretched and stressed Canadian troops. The way his panel argues it, another 1,000 soldiers must join the Kandahar fight by 2009 or we should abdicate the battle.

But a scan of troop maps and a shuffle through the latest deployment bumps suggest Prime Minister Stephen Harper has plenty of ammunition to shoot for an international rescue of Canada's besieged mission.

Canada is saluted ad nauseam by Afghan leaders and visiting dignitaries as a country at the pivotal heart of an international struggle against the Taliban. As goes Kandahar, so goes the war against the insurgency, the theory goes.

Yet Kandahar is ringed by Afghan provinces under American and British forces which, in tandem with their military partners, post between four and nine times the 1,700 Canadian fighting force, according to the international security assistance force figures.

To the west, Britain leads a deployment of 7,753 with its Danish and Australian partners. To the east, the Americans have 15,000 soldiers with help from Turkey, to be bolstered later this year by another 3,500 U.S. marines.

Poland has pledged another 400 more pilots and combat soldiers this year. Norway will bolster its 500 troops by another 150 this spring. The Dutch have locked in their 1,500 soldiers until 2010. And the Brits are expected to divert even more troops into Afghanistan from Iraq later this year.

Exodus, what exodus? If anything, there's an influx of troops to Afghanistan, which should eliminate any excuse for leaving the critical south shortchanged of soldiers.

Perhaps Kabul headquarters — which Manley's panel derided as having "a top-heavy command structure" resulting in a "serious failure of strategic direction and persistent fragmentation" — is more the problem than a solution.

The walled-in compound houses almost twice the number of fighting soldiers fielded by Canada. They could probably dump a thousand brassy paper shufflers into Kandahar and nobody would notice they were gone.

The foreign laggards assigned to Afghanistan's democratic defence are hard to find on the map — which makes them easy to identify as laggards.

The Italians appear holed up everywhere except battle zones, usually hanging around regional headquarters.

The northern region, while no picnic, is calm enough to be considered cushy by Kandahar standards. Here you find the French, Germans, Swedes and some Dutch.

The diplomatic argument goes that the louder Canada campaigns for more help, the less likely others will raise their hand to offer it.

Perhaps, then, the Harper government should quietly ship over a container of Manley panel reports with a key fact highlighted — specifically that a 2,500-person vacancy on the Kandahar air field will soon represent Canada's legacy if we don't get a fair share of the foreign soldiers in the conflict.

It's time to raise a serious stink. If nobody else, at least the Romanians might respond.

dmartin@canwest.com

PM gives thumbs-up to Afghan mission report

IDNUMBER 200801240025
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Stephen Harper;
KEYWORDS: CANDIDATES; POLITICAL PARTIES; OPPOSITION; POLITICIANS; POLITICS; RESULTS
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 352

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given his preliminary approval to the hard-hitting report on Afghanistan by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, Canwest News Service has learned.

But Harper still wants to consult his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said Wednesday.

Harper views the findings of the five-member independent panel, headed by Manley, as "a good and positive report," despite the fact it was critical of the Conservative government's handling of the Afghanistan file.

"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source told the Canwest.

Harper is grateful to Manley and his panel for their work, the source added.

Harper will discuss the report's recommendations at a cabinet meeting later this week. He is not expected to spend much time talking about Afghanistan at a speech scheduled for Friday in Ottawa.

"It's really going to set the direction and tone for the government for the second session," the source said of the speech, stressing that the prime minister is "not looking to drag out a response."

With the House of Commons due to reconvene Monday, Harper's speech on Friday had been planned before Manley bumped up the release of his report on Tuesday.

Harper's speech, in addition to laying out priorities for the next parliamentary session, was also intended to mark Wednesday's second anniversary of the Conservatives' federal election win.

The Manley report criticized the Harper government for not adequately explaining the importance of the military mission in Afghanistan directly to Canadians. It urged Harper to "step up" and personally take the lead in a new diplomatic offensive to push NATO allies to provide at least 1,000 additional troops for southern Afghanistan so that Canadian troops there could focus more on training the Afghan army.

The report also suggested that Harper might want to delay his promised vote in the Commons until after the NATO leaders in Bucharest in early April.

Manley and his fellow panellists wanted to strengthen Harper's negotiating position going into the NATO summit. With the Liberals, Bloc Quebecois and NDP all calling for Canada to end combat operations by February 2009, it would appear likely that the Conservatives would lose a vote in the Commons on extending the mission.

Roadside bomb kills Canadian soldier; Afghanistan death toll now at 78

IDNUMBER 200801240018
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
KEYWORDS: WAR; BOMBINGS; EXPLOSIONS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 352

One Canadian soldier was killed and two others injured when their armoured vehicle struck an improvised explosive device (IED) Wednesday in Afghanistan.

The incident occurred during a road clearing operation about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City.

It brings to 78 the number of Canadian soldiers killed there since 2002.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have since been released from hospital, military officials told a news conference early Thursday Kandahar time.

The name of the dead soldier is being withheld at the request of the family.

It has been a tough month so far for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30. On that date, Gunner Jonathan Dion was killed by a roadside bomb.

One week later, on Jan. 6, Warrant Officer Hani Massouh and Cpl. Eric Labbe died in a vehicle rollover.

And last week, on Jan. 15, another roadside bomb was the cause of death for the 77th soldier killed in Afghanistan, Trooper Richard Renaud. A funeral for the 26-year-old is scheduled for this Saturday in Quebec.

Wednesday's casualty comes after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's future role in Afghanistan, published its report on Tuesday.

The Manley report recommends that Canada should extend its commitment beyond February 2009, but only if two conditions are met --- that NATO provides at least 1,000 more soldiers to help the 2,500 Canadian troops with security in the Kandahar region and that the Canadian government get better equipment, transport helicopters specifically, for soldiers.

The five-person panel is critical of how the aid and development angle of the mission is unfolding and of how the federal government is communicating with Canadians about the mission.

The report is also blunt in its assessment of the war and says that generally security has gotten worse, not better, in the Kandahar region where Canadians are fighting.

The panel says that an immediate or premature withdrawal of troops would cause more harm than good.

Among other things, it could weaken the delivery of aid, encourage the insurgency and undermine Canada's influence on the world stage, it says.

Canadian lives are invested in Afghanistan, the report notes, and "the sacrifices made there, by Canadians and their families, must be respected."

In Manley's opinion, an immediate withdrawal of troops "without making an effort to achieve a better result for Afghans would squander our investment and dishonour our sacrifice to date," he said at a news conference Tuesday.

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IDNUMBER 200801240016
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
KEYWORDS: BOMBINGS; WAR; FOREIGN AID; BOMB THREATS;
EXPLOSIONS; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Brian Hutchinson
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 301

One Canadian soldier was killed and two were injured when the light armoured vehicle they were riding in struck a roadside bomb early Wednesday afternoon.

The soldiers were engaged in a road-clearing exercise about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City in Panjwaii district, Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche told reporters here this morning.

At the request of the family, the name of the fallen soldier was not immediately released.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have since been released from hospital, according to Laroche.

The soldier is the 78th member of Canada's Armed Forces to die in Afghanistan since 2002.

Laroche said the area where the Canadians were operating is a known trouble spot larded with improvised explosive devices.

On Jan. 19, he added, five members of an Afghan family were killed and three were injured by such a device.

The Canadians were part of a team attempting to locate and remove bombs in the area.

"We are making the area more secure, more secure for us and more secure for Afghans, because the Taliban don't make the difference," said Laroche, commander of Canada's military forces in Afghanistan.

"That's what Canadians are doing, and we won't stop helping the people of Afghanistan."

The western area of Panjwaii district is now considered a Taliban sanctuary by the Canadian military.

But only six months ago, senior officers described it as one of the "safer areas" of Kandahar province.

It has been a tough month so far for Canadian troops in Afghanistan.

They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30.

On that date, Gunner Jonathan Dion was killed by a roadside bomb.

One week later, on Jan. 6, Warrant Officer Hani Massouh and Cpl. Eric Labbe died in a vehicle rollover.

And last week, on Jan. 15, another roadside bomb was the cause of death for the 77th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan, Trooper Richard Renaud. A funeral for the 26-year-old is scheduled for this Saturday in Quebec.

The latest death comes one day after a special panel headed by John Manley released its report on Canada's role in Afghanistan.

The Manley report recommends Canada extend its commitment beyond February 2009, but only if two conditions are met — that NATO provides at least 1,000 more soldiers to help the 2,500 Canadian troops fighting in the Kandahar region and that the Canadian government get better equipment, transport helicopters specifically, for soldiers.

The panel was critical of how the aid and development angle of the mission is unfolding and of how the federal government is communicating with Canadians about the mission.

Manley report gets early nod from PM

IDNUMBER 200801240050
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 246

OTTAWA – Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given his preliminary approval to the hard-hitting report on Afghanistan by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, Canwest News Service has learned.

But Harper still wants to consult with his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said Wednesday.

Harper views the findings of the five-member independent panel headed by Manley as "a good and positive report" despite the fact it was critical of the Conservative government's handling of the Afghanistan file.

"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source told Canwest.

Harper is grateful to Manley and his panel for their work, the source added.

Harper will discuss the report's recommendations at a cabinet meeting later this week.

The prime minister is not expected to spend much time talking about Afghanistan at a speech scheduled for Friday in Ottawa. "It's really going to set the direction and tone for the government for the second session," the source said of the speech, stressing that the prime minister is "not looking to drag out a response."

With the House of Commons due to reconvene Monday, Harper's speech Friday had been planned before Manley bumped up the release of his report on Tuesday.

The Manley report criticized the Harper government for not adequately explaining the importance of the military mission in Afghanistan directly to Canadians.

Manley urged Harper to "step up" and personally take the lead in a new diplomatic offensive to push NATO allies to provide at least 1,000 additional troops for southern Afghanistan so that Canadian troops there could focus more on training the Afghan army.

Afghanistan toll hits 78

IDNUMBER 200801240047
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A10
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 248

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – One Canadian soldier was killed and two others injured when their armoured vehicle struck an improvised explosive device Wednesday in Afghanistan.

The incident occurred during a road clearing operation about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City. It brings to 78 the number of Canadian soldiers killed there since 2002.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have since been released from hospital, military officials told a news conference early Thursday Kandahar time.

The name of the dead soldier is being withheld at the request of the family.

It has been a tough month so far for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30. Wednesday's casualty comes after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's future role in Afghanistan, published its report on Tuesday.

CANADA'S COMMITMENT

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The report is also blunt in its assessment of the war and says that generally, security has gotten worse, not better, in the Kandahar region where Canadians are fighting.

The panel says that an immediate or premature withdrawal of troops would cause more harm than good.

Explosion kills Canadian in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200801240113
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: D8
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD,
Afghanistan
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 214

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (CNS) -- One Canadian soldier was killed and two were injured early Wednesday afternoon when the light armoured vehicle in which they were riding was struck by an improvised explosive device.

The soldiers were engaged in a road-clearing exercise about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City, in the western reaches of Panjwahi district, Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche told reporters here Thursday morning, local time.

At the request of the family, the name of the fallen soldier was not immediately released.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have since been released from hospital, according to Laroche.

The soldier is the 78th member of Canada's Armed Forces to die in Afghanistan since the Canadian military deployed here in early 2002.

The latest incident occurred two years after Canadian diplomat Glyn Berry was killed in a suicide bombing near Kandahar.

Laroche said the area in which the Canadians were operating is a known trouble spot that is loaded with IEDs.

On Jan. 19, he added, five members of an Afghan family were killed and three were injured by such a device. The Canadians were part of a team attempting to locate and remove IEDs in the area.

"We are making the area more secure, more secure for us and more secure for Afghans, because the Taliban don't make the difference," said Laroche, commander of Canada's military forces in Afghanistan.

"That's what Canadians are doing, and we won't stop helping the people of Afghanistan."

The latest death comes one day after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's role in Afghanistan, released its report.

Manley report largely ignored in Europe

IDNUMBER 200801240111
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: D8
DATELINE: PARIS
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 296

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization refused to comment Wednesday on a Canadian government-appointed panel's report which has proposed Canada withdraw from Afghanistan unless allies contribute 1,000 more troops to help Canadian soldiers battle the Taliban in the deadly Kandahar region.

The European media, meanwhile, has largely ignored the report produced by an independent panel headed by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley.

NATO spokesperson James Appathurai said it is too soon to comment on the Manley panel's recommendations or its stinging criticism of the campaign against Taliban insurgents.

"The (Canadian) government has not taken a position. The Parliament is not taking a position on these recommendations," Appathurai told reporters during a briefing at alliance headquarters in Brussels. "So NATO will certainly not take a position at this time."

He said the report, which already has been reviewed by Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, was "thorough (and) very well written."

The European media responded to the report with a yawn. Of the numerous French, British, German, Italian and Spanish newspapers available at a downtown Paris newsstand, only the London-based Financial Times mentioned the Manley report. The story was on the bottom of page six.

Some analysts have warned NATO itself could collapse if it fails in Afghanistan, and one German politician recently warned a Canadian withdrawal could trigger the alliance's demise.

"There is a lot of fear that if Canada withdraws its troops, saying 'We withdrew because we didn't get enough support from others,' this is the end of NATO," said Hans-Ulrich Klose, a Social Democratic Party member of the Bundestag, Germany's parliament, and vice-chair of the Bundestag's foreign affairs committee. "NATO cannot be allowed to fail."

Klose, in an interview with Canwest News Service, urged Prime Minister Stephen Harper to put more pressure on countries like Germany and France to station troops in the more dangerous southern parts of Afghanistan.

Manley report impresses PM

IDNUMBER 200801240041
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Canwest News Photo / John Manley shakes his fists while speaking Wednesday to the National Post on Canada's role in Afghanistan ;
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 467

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given his preliminary approval to the hard-hitting report on Afghanistan by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, Canwest News Service has learned.

But Harper still wants to consult with his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said Wednesday.

Harper views the findings of the five-member independent panel headed by Manley as "a good and positive report" despite the fact it was critical of the Conservative government's handling of the Afghanistan file.

"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source told Canwest.

Harper is grateful to Manley and his panel for their work, the source added.

Harper will discuss the report's recommendations at a cabinet meeting later this week.

The prime minister is not expected to spend much time talking about Afghanistan at a speech scheduled for Friday in Ottawa.

"It's really going to set the direction and tone for the government for the second session," the source said of the speech, stressing that the prime minister is "not looking to drag out a response."

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Harper's speech, in addition to laying out priorities for the next parliamentary session, was also intended to mark Wednesday's second anniversary of the Conservatives' federal election win.

The Manley report criticized the Harper government for not adequately explaining the importance of the military mission in Afghanistan directly to Canadians.

Manley urged Harper to "step up" and personally take the lead in a new diplomatic offensive to push NATO allies to provide at least 1,000 additional troops for southern Afghanistan so that Canadian troops there could focus more on training the Afghan army.

The report also suggested that Harper might want to delay his promised vote in the Commons until after the NATO leaders summit in Bucharest in early April.

Manley and his fellow panellists wanted to strengthen Harper's negotiating position going into the NATO summit. With the Liberals, Bloc Quebecois and NDP all calling for Canada to end combat operations by February 2009, it would appear likely that the Conservatives would lose a vote in the Commons on extending the mission.

The source said Harper has not yet decided whether to adopt the recommendation to delay the vote, and added that the prime minister wants to discuss the report with his full caucus, likely on Saturday.

Stanley Kober, a foreign policy scholar with Washington's Cato Institute, said NATO's divisions now run so deep that the fractures may be irreparable.

As a Cold War creation, the organization showed great solidarity in the face of threat posed by the Soviet Union, he said. But it has floundered badly in the post-Cold War era, especially in Afghanistan.

"The glue that holds it together --- you don't have the same sort of feeling that you had back in the Cold War days," Kober said Wednesday.

Manley's proposal for the alliance to come up with 1,000 additional troops may prove too challenging for NATO planners, he said.

"I just don't see where they're going to come from, I don't see the support. As a consequence, I think we are really in difficulty."

(OTTAWA CITIZEN)

Manley paints ugly Afghan reality

IDNUMBER 200801240030
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Forum
PAGE: A10
COLUMN: Don Martin
BYLINE: Don Martin
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 659

The mission is a mess.

In a devastatingly frank assessment reflecting the sad reality of military forces in Kandahar, an independent panel says Canada's losing battle against the Taliban demands a desperate measure for a desperate time.

It suggests a form of diplomatic blackmail against the 39-nation international security force that guides the ailing Afghanistan mission: bail us out with another 1,000 fighting soldiers or we're bailing out of the conflict.

That contentious bottom line is not what Prime Minister Stephen Harper had in mind when he summoned former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley out of political retirement to consider four options for Canada's future role in the conflict.

None of the above, declared the five-member Manley panel, after digesting 200 submissions and taking a bear-witness tour of Afghanistan.

The panel found Canada's too-few-by-half combat troops are ill-equipped, poorly co-ordinated and losing ground to the enemy while failing to deliver adequate humanitarian aid or reconstruction help to average Afghans. That ugly scenario has been poorly communicated to voters back home by governments that haven't shown prime ministerial leadership on the file, Manley argues.

Well, ouch.

No wonder Harper stayed mum on the report recommendations Tuesday until he could figure out a decent public relations salvage strategy.

But the key push is that put-up-or-shut-up ultimatum.

It will either work spectacularly well if Harper can miraculously lever additional soldiers from reluctant NATO partners or send Canada home in a sulk before the job is done.

Retreating under those dishonourable circumstances doesn't fit Harper's hawkish style and it would undoubtedly trigger an uproar in a military that would consider its 77-plus soldier lives sacrificed in vain to political gamesmanship.

For a panel that declares Afghanistan a political preoccupation requiring special cabinet and prime ministerial attention, it's a curious inconsistency to suggest Canada hold a white flag behind its back for diplomatic

emergencies. After all, Manley warns this is a holy grail mission of global security significance that can only be terminated in 2009 if Canada is willing to sacrifice its interests, compromise its humanitarian effort, encourage the Taliban to re-invade and forever black-eye Canada within the United Nations and NATO.

But diplomatic arm-twisting has failed so miserably to date that there's probably no harm in attempting to bluff that coalition of the chickens in relatively safe northern Afghanistan to move some of their troops south and into danger.

Win or lose under the raised-stakes plan, any motion derived from this panel's report is far from assured safe parliamentary passage.

The New Democrats and Bloc Quebecois have made their opposition to an extended mission very clear. And it'll be a difficult swallow for Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, who wants Canada out of harm's way in 2009, to support a report that fails to define the winning conditions for any withdrawal at some unspecified future date.

If Dion stands against the mission extension in April and Harper declares it a confidence vote, an election disguised as an Afghanistan referendum would be foisted on Canadians this spring.

But the greater value of the report is to paint the government-suppressed Afghanistan picture that embedded reporters and non-government aid agencies have seen for themselves in recent years.

There is no doubt Canadian soldiers are fiercely loyal to the mission, but lack essential equipment. There is a sense of helplessness among troops waiting for other nations' helicopters to pick up their injured and deliver supplies. Canada does not have any lift capacity of its own in the war, something the panel wants fixed.

Well-meaning soldiers in reconstruction units tend to be deployed haphazardly in heavily armed convoys. The panel says civilians would be more effective, friendly faced, good-deed-doers.

Canada's \$100 million in annual aid is delivered ad hoc by workers kept inside military bases until allowed outside by timid Ottawa bureaucrats, the panel says. Building a "signature" major hospital or irrigation project makes more sense.

The panel concludes Kandahar is not yet a writeoff for Canadian Forces, but warns it will be mission impossible if done in half measures.

The fact stands that Canada is losing its war in Afghanistan. It's high time other nations measured up as worthy allies against global terrorism -- without being blackmailed by our bluff.

Bomb kills Canadian soldier

IDNUMBER 200801240087
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: D7
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 201

One Canadian soldier was killed and two others injured when their armoured vehicle struck an improvised explosive device (IED) Wednesday in Afghanistan.

The incident occurred during a road clearing operation about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City. It brings to 78 the number of Canadian soldiers killed there since 2002.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have since been released from hospital, military officials told a news conference early Thursday Kandahar time.

The name of the dead soldier is being withheld at the request of the family.

It has been a tough month so far for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30. On that date, Gunner Jonathan Dion was killed by a roadside bomb. One week later, on Jan. 6, Warrant Officer Hani Massouh and Cpl. Eric Labbe died in a vehicle rollover. And last week, on Jan. 15., another roadside bomb was the cause of death for the 77th soldier killed in Afghanistan, Trooper Richard Renaud. A funeral for the 26-year-old is scheduled for this Saturday in Quebec.

Wednesday's casualty comes after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's future role in Afghanistan, published its report on Tuesday.

Panel confirms Canada's role in ensuring global security

IDNUMBER 200801240060
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Reuters / The Manley panel deserves praise for showing Canadians why our Afghanistan mission is important, writes Asoka Weerasinghe. ;
BYLINE: Asoka Weerasinghe
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 344

Re: Marines to back up Canadians in Kandahar, Jan. 23.

I doff my hat to John Manley and his panel of experts for having showed us that, after all Canadians can understand the reasons why our valiant troops are in Afghanistan.

Their report explained that bringing the troops home, which is what the NDP and some other Canadians want done, before they can finish their work, would do irreparable harm to the people of Afghanistan and Canada's reputation. What should be underlined is that withdrawing has geopolitical implications of instability in the region, which will have a ripple effect on Canada, and damage global security. Canada is part of that global community, so we cannot just abdicate our international responsibilities.

The panel has very clearly mapped out for Canada how to gain real weight and credibility as an international player that can solve international problems and reclaim our stature of the Nobel Peace Prize Pearsonian era.

This certainly undercuts the foolishness of Liberals wanting to become international peacemakers in Sri Lanka's separatist feud, when at the same time helping to stuff funds in one of the antagonists, the Tamil Tigers' war chests, via the Tamil diaspora, especially in the Greater Toronto Area. That is clearly not how international peace mediation works, and it is embarrassing to say the least.

I don't think most of our parliamentarians got it when Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai, addressing our Parliament, said that the military mission in Afghanistan was important for the long-term security, not only in his country but also in Canada and the rest of the world.

Mr. Karzai also said that Sept. 11, 2001 showed us that the cost of ignoring Afghanistan was higher than the cost of helping it, as Afghanistan was the breeding ground of the terrorists who destroyed the World Trade Center's twin towers with hijacked planes.

That is what our involvement in Afghanistan is all about, together with helping Afghans to live in a peaceful country, after many decades of turmoil and foreign invasions, so that they can chart their own course to prosper as a peaceful democracy.

Asoka Weerasinghe,

Parroting U.S.

IDNUMBER 200801240059
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
BYLINE: John Gilmore
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 65

John Manley wants Stephen Harper to "personally lead our diplomatic initiative" on Afghanistan. But how can a prime minister who covers up torture and has been parroting White House propaganda on the Middle East hope to have any moral standing in the region? Mr. Harper is morally and politically bankrupt on foreign affairs.

John Gilmore, Montreal

Harper gives Manley report early OK; 'The mission is not without its problems,' Tory insider admits

IDNUMBER 200801240016
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 369

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But Mr. Harper still wants to consult with his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said yesterday.

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"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source said.

Mr. Harper is grateful to Mr. Manley and his panel for their work, the source said.

The prime minister will discuss the report's recommendations at a cabinet meeting later this week.

He is not expected to spend much time talking about Afghanistan in a speech scheduled for tomorrow in Ottawa.

"It's really going to set the direction and tone for the government for the second session," the source said of the speech, stressing that the prime minister is "not looking to drag out a response."

With the House of Commons due to reconvene Monday, Mr. Harper's speech had been planned before Mr. Manley bumped up the release of his report on Tuesday. In addition to laying out priorities for the next parliamentary session, it was also intended to mark yesterday's second anniversary of the Conservatives' federal election win.

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Mr. Manley urged Mr. Harper to "step up" and personally take the lead in a new diplomatic offensive to push NATO allies to provide at least 1,000 additional troops for southern Afghanistan so that Canadian troops there could focus more on training the Afghan army.

The report also suggested that Mr. Harper might want to delay his promised vote in the Commons until after the NATO leaders summit in Bucharest in early April.

Harper gives Manley report early OK; 'The mission is not without its problems,' Tory insider admits 13

Mr. Manley and his fellow panellists wanted to strengthen Mr. Harper's negotiating position going into the NATO summit. With the Liberals, Bloc Québécois and NDP all calling for Canada to end combat operations by February 2009, it would appear likely that the Conservatives would lose a vote in the Commons on extending the mission.

The source said Mr. Harper has not yet decided whether to adopt the recommendation to delay the vote, and added that the prime minister wants to discuss the report with his full caucus, likely on Saturday.

Soldier killed, two hurt by roadside bomb; Canadians were on road-clearing operation south of Kandahar City

IDNUMBER 200801240015
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 393

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The report is also blunt in its assessment of the war and says that generally, security has gotten worse, not better, in the Kandahar region where Canadians are fighting.

The panel says that an immediate or premature withdrawal of troops would cause more harm than good. Among other things, it could weaken the delivery of aid, encourage the insurgency and undermine Canada's

influence on the world stage, it says.

Canadian lives are invested in Afghanistan, the report notes, and "the sacrifices made there, by Canadians and their families, must be respected."

An immediate withdrawal of troops "without making an effort to achieve a better result for Afghans would squander our investment and dishonour our sacrifice to date," Mr. Manley said at a news conference Tuesday.

According to the panel, its proposals will honour the sacrifices soldiers have already made and serve Canadian interests.

Harper gives Manley report early OK; 'The mission is not without its problems,' Tory insider admits

IDNUMBER 200801240014
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 369

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given his preliminary approval to the hard-hitting report on Afghanistan by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley.

But Mr. Harper still wants to consult with his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said yesterday.

Mr. Harper views the findings of the five-member independent panel headed by Mr. Manley as "a good and positive report" despite the fact it was critical of the Conservative government's handling of the Afghanistan file.

"We are under no illusions that the mission is not without its problems," the source said.

Mr. Harper is grateful to Mr. Manley and his panel for their work, the source said.

The prime minister will discuss the report's recommendations at a cabinet meeting later this week.

He is not expected to spend much time talking about Afghanistan in a speech scheduled for tomorrow in Ottawa.

"It's really going to set the direction and tone for the government for the second session," the source said of the speech, stressing that the prime minister is "not looking to drag out a response."

With the House of Commons due to reconvene Monday, Mr. Harper's speech had been planned before Mr. Manley bumped up the release of his report on Tuesday. In addition to laying out priorities for the next parliamentary session, it was also intended to mark yesterday's second anniversary of the Conservatives' federal election win.

The Manley report criticized the Harper government for not adequately explaining the importance of the military mission in Afghanistan directly to Canadians.

Mr. Manley urged Mr. Harper to "step up" and personally take the lead in a new diplomatic offensive to push NATO allies to provide at least 1,000 additional troops for southern Afghanistan so that Canadian troops there could focus more on training the Afghan army.

The report also suggested that Mr. Harper might want to delay his promised vote in the Commons until after the NATO leaders summit in Bucharest in early April.

Harper gives Manley report early OK; 'The mission is not without its problems,' Tory insider admits 17

Mr. Manley and his fellow panellists wanted to strengthen Mr. Harper's negotiating position going into the NATO summit. With the Liberals, Bloc Québécois and NDP all calling for Canada to end combat operations by February 2009, it would appear likely that the Conservatives would lose a vote in the Commons on extending the mission.

The source said Mr. Harper has not yet decided whether to adopt the recommendation to delay the vote, and added that the prime minister wants to discuss the report with his full caucus, likely on Saturday.

European press snubs findings, NATO refuses to comment

IDNUMBER 200801240013
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: PARIS
BYLINE: Peter O'Neil
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 189

PARIS – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization refused to comment yesterday on a Canadian government–appointed panel's report that has proposed Canada withdraw from Afghanistan unless allies contribute 1,000 more troops to help Canadian soldiers battle the Taliban in the deadly Kandahar region.

The European media, meanwhile, have largely ignored the report, produced by an independent panel headed by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley.

NATO spokesman James Appathurai said it is too soon to comment on the Manley panel's recommendations or its stinging criticism of the campaign against Taliban insurgents.

"The (Canadian) government has not taken a position. The Parliament is not taking a position on these recommendations," Mr. Appathurai told reporters during a briefing at alliance headquarters in Brussels. "So NATO will certainly not take a position at this time."

He said the report, which already has been reviewed by Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, was "thorough (and) very well written."

The European media responded to the report with a yawn. At a downtown Paris newsstand, only the London–based Financial Times mentioned the report.

Some analysts have warned that NATO itself could collapse if it fails in Afghanistan, and one German politician recently warned that a Canadian withdrawal could trigger the alliance's demise.

Soldier killed, two hurt by roadside bomb; Canadians were on road-clearing operation south of Kandahar City

IDNUMBER 200801240011
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SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD,
Afghanistan
BYLINE: Brian Hutchinson
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 424

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – One Canadian soldier was killed and two were injured early yesterday afternoon when their light-armoured vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device.

The soldiers were engaged in a road-clearing exercise about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City, in the western reaches of Panjwaii district, Brig. Gen. Guy Laroche told reporters here early this morning, local time.

At the request of the family, the name of the fallen soldier was not immediately released.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and been released from hospital, Brig. Gen. Laroche said.

The dead soldier is the 78th member of Canada's Armed Forces to die in Afghanistan since the Canadian military deployed here in early 2002.

Brig. Gen. Laroche said the area the soldiers were working in is a known trouble spot that is loaded with IEDs. On Jan. 19, he added, five members of an Afghan family were killed and three injured by such a device. The Canadians were part of a team attempting to locate and remove IEDs in the area.

"We are making the area more secure, more secure for us and more secure for Afghans, because the Taliban don't make the difference," said the commander of Canada's military forces in Afghanistan. "That's what Canadians are doing, and we won't stop helping the people of Afghanistan."

The western area of Panjwaii district is now considered a Taliban sanctuary by the Canadian military. But only six months ago, senior officers described it as one of the "safer areas" of Kandahar province.

It has been a tough month so far for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30. On that date, Gunner Jonathan Dion was killed by a roadside bomb. One week later, on Jan. 6, Warrant Officer Hani Massouh and Cpl. Eric Labbe died in a vehicle rollover. And last week, on Jan. 15, another roadside bomb was the cause of death for the 77th Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan, Trooper Richard Renaud. A funeral for the 26-year-old is scheduled for Saturday in Quebec.

The latest death comes one day after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's role in Afghanistan, released its report.

The Manley report recommends Canada extend its commitment beyond February 2009 but only if two conditions are met — that NATO provides at least 1,000 more soldiers to help the 2,500 Canadian troops fighting in the Kandahar region and that the Canadian government get better equipment, transport helicopters specifically, for soldiers.

The report was also blunt in its assessment of the war and said that generally, security has gotten worse, not better, in the Kandahar region where Canadians are fighting.

Afghanistan: What to do next?

IDNUMBER 200801240122
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EDITION: National
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A17
BYLINE: Norine MacDonald
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 189

Given the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, the panel chaired by John Manley was correct to recommend that 1,000 extra troops be sent to Kandahar. However, NATO overall would need to double its ground troop capacity to 80,000 and remove all caveats of where troops are deployed to have any chance of halting the insurgency's momentum. Indeed, recent Senlis Council research indicates that the Taliban now have a permanent presence in 54% of Afghanistan.

NATO forces must also be permitted to enter Pakistan, alongside the Pakistani military, to root out Taliban bases. If we don't deal with these safe havens, it will be impossible to stop the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Finally, Canada must have an effective counter-narcotics strategy for Afghanistan. As part of a poppy-for-medicine scheme, the Senlis Council believes farmers in southern Afghanistan could grow opium for the production of essential painkillers such as morphine.

Failed U.S.-led policies, such as forced poppy crop eradication, will only continue to lead locals into the arms of the Taliban, sabotaging any prospects of stability.

Norine MacDonald, president and lead field researcher, The Senlis Council, Kabul, Afghanistan.

KEYWORDS: 0

John Manley, for the record

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PUBLICATION: National Post
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EDITION: National
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: A16
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 630

Yesterday, the National Post editorial board met with members of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan, including panel chairman John Manley. What follows is an edited transcript of our questions and Mr. Manley's responses.

National Post Your report recommends that Canada demand the addition of 1,000 NATO troops to bolster our mission in Kandahar. What makes you think NATO will give us those extra troops?

John Manley We heard from quite a number of sources that there weren't enough troops on the ground. And we became convinced that at least a battle group of 1,000 troops, which would roughly double what we currently have in Kandahar province, is necessary to succeed, and therefore we have to tell NATO that this is what we require.

Now, there's a big difference between saying, "we want someone to come in and replace us" and saying "we're committed, we'll stay to get the job done, we're not putting restrictions on our military, we don't have a time limit, we're not drawing down numbers, but we have got to have additional troops to get the job done." And I think that's what is necessary to have a reasonable chance of success in Afghanistan.

NP There have been countless stories about corruption in the Afghan government. Is Hamid Karzai's government worth supporting?

JM When we started trying to put the pieces back together in Afghanistan back in 2001, we were operating in an environment that resembled 16th-century England. So we have to be realistic about what is achievable. And, besides, what exactly is the alternative?

We did organize a democracy — they had an election in which people took great risks to go and vote. Now we need to work with them to help build their capacity to have a government that is going to run on the basis that we expect.

Now, are we going to eliminate [corruption] in Afghanistan? I don't think so. But can we fix it to a degree so that people won't be stopped on the highway to pay "toll charges" to corrupt cops? Yes, that is an objective we are working toward.

It's not going to happen overnight — it will take time and determination. But if we say, "We don't like this government, so we're going to pull out," the Karzai government will probably fall, and the replacement won't be better.

NP If NATO doesn't come through with 1,000 troops, what does it mean for Canada's mission?

JM At that point, we would give notice that we would have to transfer the responsibility for security in Kandahar. And that would then trigger the unravelling of our military commitment in Kandahar province... We think it is an effective way to see that we get the support necessary to make this succeed. We aren't asking for a substitute or replacement, we are asking for a partner.

NP [Liberal leader] Stephane Dion has been very clear that he will not pay heed to this report and wants our troops out. Will you be speaking to your former colleagues in Liberal circles and trying to explain to them that something more needs to be done?

JM I don't think that this issue would be a good one for either Liberals or Conservatives to stake themselves on in an election campaign. I don't think Canadians want partisan politics to be the focal point of this mission. I think Liberal [Foreign Affairs critic] Bob Rae has left the door open with his comments on Tuesday, and I hope the government will extend an olive branch and that a bipartisan approach to this can be forged. NP Should Canada be putting forward a name for the job of NATO's special co-ordinator in Afghanistan? JM The point we have made is that within the top circle of co-ordination, there needs to be a Canadian. For Canada to be as involved in Afghanistan as we are, we should have a person high up in the decision-making structure.

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

Meeting Manley

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EDITION: National
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: A16
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 400

On Tuesday, members of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan announced their recommendations, highlighting among other matters the bureaucratic morass in Ottawa undermining Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Many departments have parallel units responsible for activities in Afghanistan and co-ordinating them falls to an associate deputy minister from foreign affairs. Too often the result is incoherent policies, projects without timelines and no benchmarks to measure effectiveness. Politically there has been a tendency to use ministers to engage in megaphone diplomacy while the Department of National Defence has been left to try and explain to Canadians the Afghan mission. This must change.

Yesterday, three of the panel's members, John Manley, Derek Burney and Jake Epp, met with the National Post's editorial board and elaborated on what Prime Minister Stephen Harper must do to effect change. All three pointed to past experience, history they had witnessed firsthand, that would better serve Canada and help the Harper government meet the challenges it faces. Mr. Epp recalled the free trade debate of the late 1980s and how the Conservative government of the time created a small Cabinet committee to deal with trade; the first Gulf War in 1990 when another committee was created to manage its demands, both examples that Mr. Burney had a hand in creating. Mr. Manley noted that after 9/11 the Liberal government used the same structure to manage the issues around the Canada/U.S. border.

It's clear from the panel's report that Mr. Harper's government must disregard concerns that putting its stamp clearly on the Afghan file will hurt its chances at the polls, and create a small committee comprised of the Prime Minister and the best minds at the Cabinet table — Jim Prentice, Tony Clement, Maxime Bernier come to mind— that will take the panel's blueprint for success and cut through the bureaucracy and inadequate leadership compromising our mission in Afghanistan. We trust Mr. Harper will draw on the panel's experience and create in the days to come a Cabinet committee under his leadership to manage and coordinate Canada's undertaking in Afghanistan.

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; CANDIDATES; POLITICAL PARTIES; POLITICS;CAMPAIGNS

Canadian troops far from alone; Foreign soldiers abound around Kandahar

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PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2008.01.24
EDITION: National
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: Don Martin
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Nathan Denette, National Post / An independent panel led by John Manley, the former Liberal Cabinet minister, said yesterday it should not be hard to find 1,000 more soldiers to join the Kandahar fight. ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Don Martin
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 595

OTTAWA –The Afghanistan panel is wrong: We are not alone. There are numerous foreign partners for Canadian soldiers at their Kandahar Air Field headquarters.

The Romanians are there and, last I looked, preoccupied with fixing the stink from a nearby sewage lagoon called Emerald Lake. The Germans have contributed the closest thing to a real restaurant, offering welcome competition to Burger King and Pizza Hut. Portuguese soldiers swing by forward operating bases for a sleepover occasionally, leaving behind gifts of beer and wine. And the Americans constantly make themselves heard as their howling F-16s launch at dawn from a runway beside Canadian sleeping quarters.

There are a handful of other countries strolling the base boardwalk, but even southern regional command officials couldn't explain their responsibilities when I asked last summer.

These are not the sort of partners John Manley, the former Liberal Cabinet minister who chaired a panel probing the Afghanistan conflict, was talking about when he demanded help for stretched and stressed Canadian troops. The way his panel argues it, another 1,000 soldiers must join the Kandahar fight by 2009 or we should abdicate the battle.

But a scan of troop maps and a shuffle through the latest deployment bumps suggest Prime Minister Stephen Harper has plenty of ammunition to shoot for an international rescue of Canada's besieged mission.

Canada is saluted ad nauseam by Afghan leaders and visiting dignitaries as a country at the pivotal heart of an international struggle against the Taliban. As goes Kandahar, so goes the war against the insurgency, the theory goes.

Yet Kandahar is ringed by Afghan provinces under American and British forces which, in tandem with their military partners, post between four to nine times the 1,700-strong Canadian fighting force, according to the international security assistance force figures.

To the west, Britain leads a deployment of 7,753 with its Danish and Australian partners. To the east, the United States has 15,000 soldiers with help from Turkey, to be bolstered later this year by another 3,500 U.S.

Marines.

Poland has pledged 400 more pilots and combat soldiers this year. Norway will bolster its 500 troops by another 150 this spring. The Dutch have locked in their 1,500 soldiers until 2010. And the Brits are expected to divert even more troops into Afghanistan from Iraq later this year.

Exodus, what exodus? If anything, there's an influx of troops to Afghanistan, which should eliminate any excuse for leaving the critical south shortchanged of soldiers.

Perhaps Kabul headquarters — which Mr. Manley's panel derided as having "a top-heavy command structure" resulting in a "serious failure of strategic direction and persistent fragmentation" — is more of a problem than a solution.

The walled-in compound houses almost twice the number of soldiers fielded by Canada. They could probably dump a thousand brassy paper shufflers into Kandahar and nobody would notice they were gone.

The foreign laggards assigned to Afghanistan's democratic defence are hard to find on the map — which makes them easy to identify as laggards.

The Italians appear holed up everywhere except battle zones, usually hanging around regional headquarters. The northern region, while no picnic, is calm enough to be considered cushy by Kandahar standards. Here you find the French, Germans, Swedes and some Dutch.

The diplomatic argument goes that the louder Canada campaigns for more help, the less likely others will raise their hand to offer it.

Perhaps, then, the Harper government should quietly ship over a container of Manley panel reports with a key fact highlighted — specifically, that a 2,500-person vacancy on the Kandahar Air Field will soon represent Canada's legacy if we don't get a fair share of the foreign soldiers in the conflict.

It's time to raise a serious stink. If nobody else, at least the Romanians might respond.

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KEYWORDS: WAR; IRAQ; ARMED FORCES; UNITED STATES

ALLIES WILL ANTE UP: MANLEY; Afghanistan mission risks 'futility' if no troops added

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PAGE: A1
ILLUSTRATION: Chart/Graph: Richard Johnson, National Post / (See hardcopyfor Chart/Graph) ;
DATELINE: TORONTO
BYLINE: James Cowan
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 682

TORONTO – If Canada's NATO allies fail to provide additional troops for southern Afghanistan, it will be an indication that the entire international mission has moved "too close to futility" and will justify Canada abdicating its responsibility for the region, John Manley said yesterday.

Mr. Manley, a former Liberal Cabinet minister, led the panel that this week delivered a report to Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Canada's role in Afghanistan. The report calls for Canada to remain committed to the NATO-led mission beyond its scheduled end in 2009, but only if other countries provide 1,000 additional troops to bolster security and training activities in the dangerous region surrounding Kandahar.

Mr. Manley said it would signal a "failure of the mission overall" if NATO was unable to find additional troops to meet Canada's requirements. He added that it would be irresponsible for the government to leave troops in the region without adequate support.

"The obligation that any government has is to make sure it does not risk its troops in a cavalier fashion when there's no reasonable prospect of success," he told the National Post's editorial board.

"Looking at it on the continuum from utility to futility, then that would put us too close to futility where we'd have to say, with regret, that we can no longer look our kids in the eyes and say, 'You've got to go there.' "

Jake Epp, another panel member and a former Conservative Cabinet minister, added that a withdrawal would be "a failure of NATO" rather than Canada.

Canada has approximately 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, mostly in Kandahar.

While other NATO countries have so far been reluctant to deploy their personnel in the southern region, Mr. Manley yesterday predicted a shift in attitudes toward the mission among European members.

"I've seen this movie before, when I was foreign minister and going to NATO meetings and the debate was about Bosnia," he said. "The Europeans weren't there and Canada had 1,800 troops there ... and [the Europeans] said they couldn't do it. Well, they did. Eventually, it became significant enough for NATO prestige and European prestige that they did come to the table."

Mr. Manley admitted it would be "extraordinarily messy" if Canada was forced to withdraw from southern Afghanistan. However, he suggested it was unlikely a withdrawal would ever come to fruition and said it "should not be difficult" to muster the additional troops.

"It should be achievable; it should not be that difficult," he said.

Derek Burney, another panel member and a former Canadian ambassador, noted the United States last week committed to sending more than 2,000 Marines to southern Afghanistan for seven months. If just half of those assignments were made permanent, it would fulfill the panel's proposal, he said.

Panel members have suggested Mr. Harper delay any vote in the House of Commons on the mission until after a NATO meeting in April. The Prime Minister has not publicly commented on the report, but Stéphane Dion, the Liberal leader, on Tuesday reiterated his call for Canadian troops to end their combat role by February, 2009.

Mr. Manley yesterday called upon his Liberal colleagues to support the panel's recommendations. He also cautioned it would be unwise for Liberals to try to fight an election over the future of the Afghan mission.

"I don't think this is an issue that would be a good one for either party to stake itself on in an election campaign. I'm not sure if Canadians want partisan politics to be the focal point of a mission like this," he said. "And certainly, if I was campaigning as a Liberal, there are a bunch of other things that I might want to put my focus on other than a military expedition that was started by a Liberal government."

The panel's report also advocates investments in new helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles as well as a focusing of reconstruction and development efforts on aid that directly helps Afghans. The panel suggests Ottawa should pursue a "signature" project in the country, such as a hospital.

Mr. Manley said the Prime Minister must also take a direct role in explaining Canada's role in Afghanistan to Canadians and lobbying his NATO allies for further support.

"We would encourage the Prime Minister to be talking to his NATO counterparts starting now," he said.

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

Soldier killed in road blast; Wounded pair released from hospital. At least one Canadian has been killed in Afghanistan every week since Dec. 30

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EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
KEYWORDS: EXPLOSIONS; WAR
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 280

One Canadian soldier was killed and two were injured yesterday afternoon when the light armoured vehicle they were riding in was struck by an improvised explosive device.

The soldiers were engaged in a road-clearing exercise about 35 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City, in the western reaches of Panjwahi district, Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche told reporters here this morning.

At the request of the family, the name of the dead soldier was not released.

The two wounded soldiers have contacted their families and have been released from hospital, Laroche said.

The soldier is the 78th Canadian to die in Afghanistan since the Canadian military began its mission here in 2002.

Laroche said the area where the Canadians were working is larded with IEDs.

It has been a tough month for Canadian troops in Afghanistan. They have suffered at least one casualty every week since Dec. 30.

The latest death comes one day after the special panel headed by John Manley, convened by the federal government to study Canada's role in Afghanistan, issued its report.

The Manley report recommends Canada extend its commitment beyond February 2009 but only if two conditions are met – that NATO provide at least 1,000 more soldiers to help the 2,500 Canadian troops fighting in the Kandahar region and that the Canadian government get better equipment, transport helicopters specifically, for soldiers.

The report was also blunt in its assessment of the war and said that generally, security has gotten worse, not better, in the Kandahar region where Canadians are fighting.

The panel said that an immediate or premature withdrawal of troops would cause more harm than good. Among other things, it could weaken the delivery of aid, encourage the insurgency and undermine Canada's influence on the world stage, it said.

Soldier killed in road blast; Wounded pair released from hospital. At least one Canadian has been killed in A

Prime Minister Stephen Harper gave the report an initial thumbs-up yesterday, but he said he still wants to consult with his cabinet and caucus before giving a more detailed public response, a source close to the prime minister said yesterday.

Soldier killed in road blast; Wounded pair released from hospital. At least one Canadian has been killed in A