

The image shows the 'canoe network' logo in white text on a black background, followed by three dots and the 'cnews' logo in red and white text.

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Canada would be first nation to abandon Afghanistan

By [KATHLEEN HARRIS](#) -- Sun Media

BRUSSELS, Belgium - Canada would be the first NATO ally to turn its back on Afghanistan if it pulls troops out in 2009, a spokesman for the military alliance warned today.

Responding to an ultimatum by Prime Minister Stephen Harper that Canada would withdraw from Kandahar unless NATO allies supply extra equipment and 1,000 more troops, James Appathurai issued the stark reminder that no country has yet left the International Security Assistance Force mission. He also pointed out that the Dutch have extended their deployment and 10 other countries have announced they will increase their troops in the theatre.

"We would certainly wish to see Canada extend it's mission in Afghanistan," he said from NATO headquarters. "We are not yet at the stage where the Afghan forces can stand on their feet alone. If you believe in defending human rights, you can not do that in Afghanistan without a combat presence. If you believe in defending women's rights, you can not do that unless you can stop the Taliban from taking power, because we know what they do when they're in power."

Appathurai also shot back at Harper's claim that NATO's reputation and credibility is on the line if other nations don't climb on board to share the heavy lifting, calling it "overheated speculation."

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