

## Diplomat with 'encyclopedic knowledge' to lead civilian efforts in Kandahar

DANIEL LEBLANC  
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OTTAWA — Ottawa is putting a new face at the top of its team in Kandahar, nominating diplomat Elissa Golberg to oversee Canada's mission in a province that needs aid and development to emerge from decades of war.

Ms. Golberg was named this week to the new position of representative of Canada in Kandahar, after having served as executive director of the Manley panel on the country's future role in Afghanistan.

In fact, her nomination is seen as part of the federal response to last month's Manley report, which urged the government to revamp its aid efforts and offer assistance that addresses the "immediate, practical needs of the Afghan people."

In previous years, the most visible elements of Canada's presence in Kandahar were the 2,500 soldiers in the province. But the internal announcement of Ms. Golberg's nomination made it clear that she will be at the top of the ladder in Kandahar, giving more prominence to Canada's civilian presence.

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"Ms. Golberg will be responsible for ensuring a coherent, co-ordinated and strategic approach to Canada's efforts across southern Afghanistan," said David Mulroney, associate deputy minister at Foreign Affairs, in an internal statement.

"She will act as the primary Canadian interface with senior Afghan government officials in Kandahar province."

Ms. Golberg earned a master's degree from Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs in 1997. The school's director, Fen Hampson, said she was an "outstanding" student and individual, and will be key to reshaping Canada's role in Afghanistan.

"It's a way to show the flag in another way in Kandahar," Prof. Hampson said of the nomination.

"We'll now have a strong and effective diplomatic voice and presence on the ground, much needed."

Ms. Golberg was appreciated for her "encyclopedic knowledge" of international law on the Manley panel, said member Derek Burney, who applauded the nomination.

"It's evidence of a stronger commitment from the civilian side for our mission. As you well know, the military side has dominated the public focus in Afghanistan," Mr. Burney said.

He said the creation of the position heralds a new role for Canadian diplomacy, adding that Ms. Golberg could eventually start running the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar, which is currently under military command.

"This is not a cakewalk, and I think it's a great signal to others in the department that there are officers who are ready to take on tough assignments," Mr. Burney said.

While there is a growing emphasis on bringing effective aid to Afghanistan, Ms. Golberg is well aware of the need for a continued military role in any dangerous region of the world.

In a 2003 interview with the UN's IRIN News, Ms. Golberg said humanitarian agencies have to work in a secure environment.

"Agencies need to make sure protection does not fall through the cracks at the field level and in operational planning. Sometimes, this demands a more holistic approach. There are times when it's great if beneficiaries get material assistance, but if they don't feel physically safe, then obviously that's problematic," Ms. Golberg said.

At Foreign Affairs, Ms. Golberg was also involved in the Kosovo and Lebanon files, and worked on the Canadian government's response to the South Asia earthquake of October, 2005, and the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster of December, 2004.

"She really lives and breathes public service and the need for Canada to get serious about what it's doing in these highly charged conflict zones," Mr. Hampson said.

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