

## 'War is stupid. Everybody knows that'

**Father of dead soldier breaks rank with military families, lashes out at politicians for Canada's involvement in Afghanistan**

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For the first time since troops entered Afghanistan, a parent of a Canadian soldier killed in the war has spoken out against the mission, criticizing politicians for engaging in the battle.

"War is stupid. Everybody knows that. Everybody knows that. Well, no they don't. The politicians don't know that," David Snyder, told CTV in Penticton, B.C., hours after learning his youngest son, Captain Jonathan Snyder, died Saturday night in Kandahar province after falling down a deep well during a night patrol.

With his comments, Mr. Snyder broke ranks with the families of seven dozen other Canadian soldiers who have died in Afghanistan. None of the other family members have declared opposition to the war; many say that doing so would demean the soldiers' deaths.

Mr. Snyder, a former reservist and high-school English teacher, did not return The Globe's calls for comment yesterday. Close friends said the retiree was not antiwar or antimilitary, but he had deep reservations about Afghanistan.



David Snyder, father of Captain Jonathan Snyder, who died on Saturday after falling down a deep well in Afghanistan, speaks with CTV News from his home in Penticton, B.C., on Sunday. (CTV)

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"He would certainly be in favour of the military doing what it needs to do when that's appropriate," said Padre John Briscall, who knows Mr. Snyder through work with the local Royal Canadian Legion and spent much of Sunday consoling him. "He thinks our involvement in Afghanistan was unnecessary."

Mr. Snyder is committed to public service: He is a former cadet who serves as the Legion's cadet liaison as well as on the group's executive, and is at work on a book that will chronicle Penticton veterans' war experience.

Friends said Mr. Snyder inspired similar levels of commitment in both of his sons.

"The Snyder boys were raised to be men. They were the kinds of people the world is desperately in need of," said Ian Butters, a rugby coach and English literature teacher at Penticton Secondary School who taught both Jonathan and his older brother, Adam. "Their boys were the most socially responsible young men I've ever known. They were sober, intelligent, gentle, big-souled people."

Mr. Butters said their father was "the really, really important kind of thoughtful officer who understood the role of the military in the world as a force for improving humanity, not for going out and blowing things up good."

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when Capt. Snyder fell to his death Saturday, he was on his second tour of duty in Afghanistan with the Edmonton-based Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry - a tour he was not keen to embark on, his mother, Anne, told The Globe on Sunday. He went, she said, because he thought of himself as a "professional soldier" and Afghanistan was "where I'm supposed to be."

Parents of other soldiers who have died in Afghanistan, even though they support the war, say they understand how Mr. Snyder is feeling.

Christine Caswell, stepmother of Trooper Darryl Caswell, who was killed a year ago this week in Afghanistan, said her stepson's convictions about the mission led her to continue to support the war in spite of his death.

"You've gotta believe that what they did, they did for a reason," she said, adding: "I honestly believe they're there for a good reason."

"They just lost a son. And there's a lot of emotion involved right now. They're at the bottom of the barrel with their heartache and despair."

Elain Cushley's son, Private William Cushley, had only logged three weeks of his six-month tour when he was killed in September of 2006. While Ms. Cushley continues to support the war, she said she wavered in the early days after her son's death.

"I had so many different feelings when they came and told me. You are in total shock," she said.

"Part of you did feel 'Oh, what the hell are we doing there?' It's the loss. You're just totally lost," she said.

A repatriation ceremony for Capt. Snyder's body is scheduled to take place tomorrow at CFB Trenton in Ontario.

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