

# What's the hottest thing in the Afghan desert? Yep, that'd be us.

**T**he pin-up girl has been a staple of military life for more than 60 years. During the Second World War, images of Betty Grable's endless legs, or Rita Hayworth in a tight black negligee, kept our troops pining for home. During the Vietnam War, barracks art mirrored America's ongoing sexual liberation—naked Playboy centerfolds and the racy art of Alberto Vargas paraded the foxholes of U.S. Marines in the '60s and '70s. So what's lining the walls of Canadian military outposts in Afghanistan in 2007? We'll let an expert explain.

The following letter was sent to *Maclean's* by Sgt. Chris Karigiannis of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, Charles Company, 2nd Platoon, currently stationed in Kandahar:

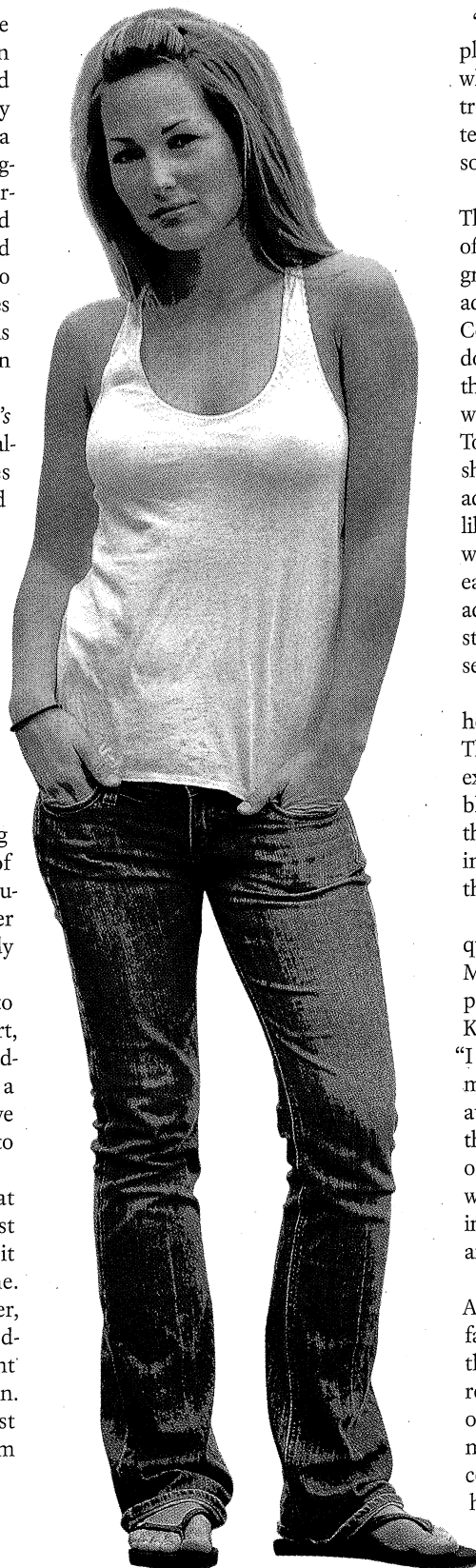
"As I sit here at my checkpoint writing this letter, the soldiers in my section are maintaining watch in the towers that surround our perimeter. Those not on security are playing chess, taking a nap or going through a box full of magazines and other reading material. Hence the purpose of my letter. *Maclean's* continues to be my preferred source for Canadian news while I am deployed on operations in Afghanistan...

"Now that I have mentioned the reading of *Maclean's*, I need to make mention of another important item, the University Student Issue (April 2, 2007) with the cover photo of an extremely attractive young lady whose name I wish I knew.

"This may sound shallow, so allow me to qualify. Out here on operations in the desert, my soldiers and I have an assortment of reading material, including some with quite a collection of female forms. Let's face it, we are mostly single with few-to-no women to even look at.

"The amazing thing is that looking at *Playboy* or some other such magazine just does not excite anymore seeing as how it is all rather superficial and very overdone. The very refreshing image on your cover, given this girl's natural beauty and incredible sexiness, had most of us in agreement that she is the best pin-up in our collection. Who would have thought that our most impressive female photo would come from *Maclean's*?

**OUR STUDENT cover girl was shocked to hear she's a pin-up in Afghanistan. 'Wow. This is extremely flattering,' she said.**



"Thanks again for keeping us informed and please thank our lovely cover girl for being who she is. You can add that some of the troops in Afghanistan think she is the hottest thing to look at here. Keep up the awesome work."

Our April cover girl's name is Kinga Ilyes. The 24-year-old Kinga was born in Romania of Hungarian heritage. She was in the second grade in 1991 when her family moved to Canada following the collapse of the Communist Ceausescu regime. Since graduating with a double major in business and sociology from the University of Western Ontario, she's been working as the manager of the downtown Toronto Abercrombie & Fitch store where she handles human resources. In typical Canadian fashion, she shops at Dollarama and likes to spend weekends at the cottage. Hard-working, frugal, intelligent, and down-to-earth, she's as far from Paris Hilton as Canada is from Afghanistan. But if a smouldering studiousness is what Canadian soldiers find sexy, Kinga is smokin' hot.

She was stunned to hear the reaction to her photo from our troops overseas. "Wow. This is extremely flattering," she gushed. "I'd expect the typical pin-up to be some buxom blond washing a car in a bikini. To find out that the soldiers appreciate the wholesome image of someone sitting in a classroom, that's so cool."

The photo shoot was arranged by an acquaintance who works at Real People Model Management, an agency that provides non-professional models for photographers like Kourosh Keshiri, who took the cover picture. "I thought I'd give it a try. I've never done any modelling other than those silly fashion shows at university," Kinga admits. As for that look that's set hearts fluttering in a dusty war zone on the other side of the globe, she says she was only trying to look pensive. "I was asking myself, 'why is an education so expensive, and did I get my money's worth?'"

After being named the hottest thing in the Afghan desert, Kinga is eager to return the favour. "I'd like to say hello to the troops and thank them for all their efforts," she says respectfully. "We all appreciate your work over there. Your bravery and courage are more than most of us will ever do for our country in a lifetime." And to Sgt. Chris and his platoon she adds: "I wish you safety and hope to see you home soon." The same goes for us. **M**