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Medic recalls colleague's death; Ambush that killed Canadian soldier unfolded within sight of a forward base

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DATE: 2008.05.09
SECTION: News
PAGE: C10
BYLINE: THE CANADIAN PRESS
COPYRIGHT: © 2008 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 549

The ambush that took the life of Cpl. Michael Starker unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, much to the horror and dismay of his fellow soldiers and a long-time friend.

Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, 40, had known Starker for 10 years, serving with him both in the reserves and as emergency medical technicians in Calgary.

The sharp crackle of the fierce exchange was the first indication to troops at Masum Ghar, about 35 kilometres west of Kandahar, that something was up. "We could see it from where we were; we could see the firefight going on," said Lacentra, a medic with the 15th Field Ambulance evacuation platoon.

He was standing in the command post when the base commander ran out and mounted one of the bastion's walls to get a view of what was going on.

"You could see his concern," Lacentra recalled in an interview yesterday with The Canadian Press.

The radio began to chatter.

There were wounded.

How bad?

When the answer came back, Lacentra turned to the soldiers beside him.

"I said: 'You know a gunshot wound is never a good thing.'"

His training as an ambulance technician had kicked in.

"We knew it was Canadians and I guess I was, without even consciously doing it, was trying to prepare these guys. I just said that kind of gunshot wound doesn't end up with a good result."

At the time, Lacentra didn't know it was his friend, the guy with whom he had worked out at the gym every day during training in Edmonton, the guy whom he clearly looked up to as a paramedic, a soldier and a person of "amazing character and strength."

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Starker, 36, was evacuated by helicopter to the NATO military hospital at Kandahar Airfield along with a second unidentified soldier, who was also wounded. Doctors pronounced Starker dead at the Role 3 treatment centre.

The ambush on Tuesday, the first shooting death of a Canadian soldier in direct combat with the enemy in almost 20 months, is still under investigation by military police.

It was very quiet that evening in the vehicle when Lacentra drove with other troops back to the airfield, where the majority of Canada's 2,500 troops in Afghanistan are stationed.

Once in a while, the cheerful Italian-immigrant to Canada, who possesses an easy smile, likes to sing in the car.

"So when we got just close to KAF actually one of the guys said: 'Hey Fabio why don't you sing us a song.'"

He did, but his heart was only in it for a few minutes.

His mind was on Starker.

"I kind of knew it was him, but I hoped it was somebody else. Right? That's not a good thing to say," he added with tears beginning in the corners of his eyes.

"I didn't believe it was him because I know how well trained Mike is. He's an ex-sniper. I just kept thinking it was someone else because there was no way Mike would get shot that way."

Back inside the wire, he heard the news from a nurse at the Role 3 hospital.

It struck like a bolt of lightning.

He had seen Starker only last Saturday when they spent four hours together unloading medical supplies.

Since his friend's death, Lacentra has spent a lot of time thinking about the ambulance calls the two of them occasionally went on together in Calgary.

There was the time Lacentra had been doing his practicum and wanted to impress both his instructor and Starker, who was driving, by inserting an intravenous line in patient as they were rolling back to hospital. They hit a bump and Lacentra missed.

"And I looked up and said 'Thanks' and he's looking at me. I pictured it the other day, I could see him. He had his face . . . turned looking at me with a crook smile."

Lacentra got the lesson: Don't be cocky.

"That was the kind of thing he'd do; he wouldn't tell you, don't do this and he wouldn't purposely try to make you fail, but when it did happen, just the look, you could see it on his face. I should have known better."

Starker, a reservist and ex-paratrooper, had personal reasons for returning to Afghanistan, Lacentra said.

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Ambush killed soldier within view of forward base

PUBLICATION:	Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)
DATE:	2008.05.09
SECTION:	National/World
PAGE:	B3
SOURCE:	The Canadian Press
BYLINE:	Murray Brewster
PHOTO:	Bill Graveland/The Canadian Press
DATELINE:	KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
ILLUSTRATION:	Starker; Cpl. Alasdair Robertson–More (left) and Master Cpl. Andrew Stevens talk to reporters in Calgary about the death of Cpl. Mike Starker in Afghanistan.
WORD COUNT:	619

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Lacentra, who served as a peacekeeper in 1992 as the Balkans was coming apart at the seams, is by no means naive about the risks.

But the sudden brutality of the ambush that killed his friend is hard to reconcile with the faces of grateful dirt poor Afghans who cheer on the Canadians when they pass.

"Watching the firefight changed my perspective" about the country, he said. "It made things more real."

Comrades praise fallen medic

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2008.05.09

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

COLUMN: In brief

WORD COUNT: 45

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Ambush unfolded within sight of base

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2008.05.09

SECTION: International

PAGE: C12

SOURCE: THE CANADIAN PRESS

BYLINE: Murray Brewster

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, 40, of the 5th Field Ambulance Regiment, shown in Kandahar, Thursday, witnessed the ambush that killed Canadian medic, Sgt. Michael Starker on Tuesday. Lacentra, also a medic and ambulance technician in Calgary, had known Starker for a decade. – Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 369

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Have Your Say

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2008.05.09

PAGE: A10

SECTION: Editorial Leaders

WORD COUNT: 1229

None Put heroes on front page Why did the Free Press stop putting pictures of our Canadian heroes on the front page after they have been killed in Afghanistan? It would be proper that the Free Press honour these courageous men and women by having a picture or story on the front page or as Top News.

I've noticed that the picture has been left off the front page for each of our last two heroes killed. I found out that the 82nd soldier (Pte. Terry John Street) was killed when I got to page A9, and I didn't read about the 83rd (Cpl. Michael Starker) until I got to page A7 of Wednesday's paper. I would rather see a picture of the fallen soldier than read about the prime minister's residence needing repairs, or Red River College moving classrooms. While those stories are interesting, I don't believe they are more important than readers being informed about another fallen hero.

These are Canadian soldiers who gave their lives for our country and freedom, and I believe it minimizes the ultimate sacrifice they have made by relegating their story to the inside pages.

Blair Meadows Winnipeg One great tour On Tuesday night, I had the opportunity to attend the Winnipeg General Strike Tour event hosted by Nolan Reilly and the University of Winnipeg Alumni Association. Attendees truly experienced Winnipeg's significant and influential historical past come to life. The evening began with Andy Blicq's moving and highly technically creative film *Bloody Saturday*, detailing strike events and including rare film footage.

Adjourning to the waiting transit bus, Reilly led us on a historical journey. Distant voices resonated and past community bustle was pulled into the present through excerpts read from local biographies, oral histories and locally set historical novels. Most strikingly, Reilly made connections between past and present. As freight trains rolled heavily past the tour group assembled near the CPR Weston Shops, Reilly pointed out the nearby scene of death for J.J. Harper — an event that sparked the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

History can teach us so much. The dynamics of the inequities that led to the Winnipeg General Strike still lurk today, albeit masquerading in different form — perhaps better understood as a shape-shifting phantom whose only constancy is its presence when its heart of social injustice is unrecognized.

Shirley Kowalchuk Board Member, Heritage Winnipeg Error in pension letter Re: Retired teachers suffer, May 2.

In a letter regarding the impending plebiscite on teachers' pensions, Kai Arnot makes one clear error. My understanding is that the plebiscite is being conducted by the provincial government at government expense, not by the Manitoba Teachers' Society at teachers' expense. In addition, the letter is based on an assumption that the government's proposal, based on Tim Sale's report, is up for negotiation. I believe you will find that it is the government's official, final, position.

If rejected it is gone.

As a retired teacher I have two options. I can vote to accept a pension change that is obviously less than what I would really like to see but is, at least, an immediate improvement. Or I can vote to reject the report and be back to square one with no idea of how many years it may take before a provincial government may undertake a new study to draft a new proposal.

I will vote Yes to get what I can get now and then work toward possible future improvement — not No, which I see as a vote for nothing now and nothing for the foreseeable future.

Chris Thain Winnipeg Over 30, and aware of buzz Re: Teen repellent doing the job at downtown mall, May 2.

"The secret to the Mosquito is that its buzzing beeps are apparently undetectable by those over 30." It's been two years since I first heard that Mosquito noise. I'm 37 now and the ability to hear it hasn't deteriorated. I know at least four other people besides myself (also over 30) who can hear that Mosquito's repellent noise. I have not yet had the opportunity to visit Winnipeg. When I do, I hope that the malls that I visit will not have those devices in use. The mosquito noise causes me to experience nausea and headaches.

MICHELLE GIBSON London, Ont.

Hire the best people Re: Top jobs go to non-natives in northern health region, May 6.

I am appalled at Hussain Guisti's attitude towards health care.

As a "doctor in the process of getting licensed," does he not feel that First Nations people deserve the best health care possible? How about the other citizens of Thompson? I would assume that the Burntwood Regional Health Authority and other health authorities strive to hire the most qualified individuals for the positions.

Why should the BRHA give preference to First Nations if they are not the most qualified for the position? Even "menial, low-paying jobs" are important in health care. Health care is one of the professions in which the most qualified people, particularly front-line workers like doctors and nurses, should be the most qualified for the position, not given the position because they are First Nations or any other visible minority. I would like to think that proper health care is more important than the doctor being able to say "hello", "how are you", and "thank you" in the native language. I agree that being able to do that is important, but it is not a valid reason for hiring a nurse or doctor who is less qualified or not qualified over someone who is the most qualified.

If Guisti has an issue with the "First Nations representation" at the Thompson General Hospital, he should be encouraging First Nations people to get educated to become the most qualified for the available positions.

TOM KISSOCK Winnipeg See the connection? It is ironic that the front page of last Friday's Free Press reads: Mayor pleads with Ottawa 'Just do something', regarding the city's battle against violent car thieves, and the bottom of the page reads Grand Theft Auto IV: Best Game Ever. Can you see the connection here? Matthew Lee-Wing Winnipeg Culture of dependency The premier of Ontario has called for reform of the equalization program, which contributes massively to Manitoba's cash flow. The impetus of this call is Ontario's struggling economy and the growing anger that \$20 billion is leaving that province to help others maintain certain quality-of-life standards. I am grateful for their help.

The least we can do as Manitobans is to ease the burden on other Canadians — for example, saying yes to the 1,100 jobs and the \$200-million investment we lost by saying no to the pork-processing plant. Or are the critics right to state that equalization as presently formulated is fostering a culture of dependency among those who live off it? GORDON HALUSHKA Winnipeg

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DATE: 2008.05.08
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 656

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But the sudden brutality of the ambush that killed his friend is hard to reconcile with the faces of grateful, dirt poor Afghans who cheer on the Canadians when they pass.

“Watching the firefight changed my perspective” about the country, he said. “It made things more real.”

“You see lots of kids, waving at you; happy and smiling; even adults. And you don't feel there's any real

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danger. You know what's happened. You hear about some of the stuff that's happened, but you don't feel it at that moment in time."

Afghan ambassador to Canada hopeful change in Pakistan ruling parties will improve border safety

DATE: 2008.05.08

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 399

CALGARY _ Afghanistan's ambassador to Canada is hopeful that a change in power in Pakistan will improve security along the border between the two Middle Eastern countries.

The region just inside the Pakistan border is home to between two and four million displaced Afghan refugees living in camps. It's estimated between 30,000 and 40,000 cross the border between the two countries each day.

The area is a prime recruiting and training area for the Taliban, which then send new recruits into Afghanistan to fight against the government and NATO troops, including those from Canada.

“We hope that the new elected government in Pakistan is going to work in a very transparent and meaningful way with us and with NATO in order to address some of the issues that exist across the tribal belt,” Ambassador Omar Samad said Thursday in an interview with The Canadian Press.

The Taliban and its al-Qaida allies have roamed freely through the region for years _ largely under the watch of the government of former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf. But his opponents swept general elections in February and formed a coalition. The new leaders have made restoring the country's fired judges and revising Pakistan's role in the U.S.-led war on terror top priorities.

Samad said it would benefit both Afghanistan and Pakistan to bolster security there as soon as possible.

“That decision has to involve both countries as well as our friends and allies,” he said. “It has to address the core problem of where these people are finding refuge, where they're finding funds, arms, training and recruitment.

“Anything short of that is going to perpetuate the problem for both countries.”

Although there are Taliban “safe houses,” said Samad, it is not believed there are any actual training camps within Afghanistan's borders. The Taliban have managed to regroup to a minor extent in some southern provinces but are limited in numbers and have taken heavy casualties.

“There are some elements who appear to be gaining strength in certain parts of the country for various reasons that are very local in nature,” Samad said. “There are others who have lost the ability to mount frontal assaults and are resorting to classical hit-and-run attacks as well as sending suicide bombers.”

Cpl. Michael Starker, 36, of Calgary, a member of the 15 Field Ambulance Regiment, died in just such an attack Tuesday when his patrol was ambushed in the Pashmul region of Zhari district, about 25 kilometres west of Kandahar city.

He was the 83rd Canadian soldier to have died in the war-torn nation since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.

The Canadian Press News Agenda for Friday, May 9

DATE: 2008.05.08
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 2237

EDITORS: Following is a list of news events for May 9 as of 11:45 p.m. ET: x–denotes wire, y–denotes picture, z–denotes graphics coverage. Copy from other events based on merit and availability. All times local unless otherwise noted. Queries about these events and stories in The Canadian Press report should be directed to the departments listed below (all phone numbers 416 area code):

Main Desk (National News) 507–2150; World Desk 507–2165; Sports Desk 507–2154; Ontario Desk 507–2159; Photo Desk 507–2169; Specials Desk (Syndicated Copy) 507–2152; IT Desk (Technical Trouble) 507–2099 or 800–268–8149

WORLD

BORDEAUX _ Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean meets with Bordeaux Mayor Alain Juppé. (Palais Rohan, 3:30 p.m. French time). (9:30 a.m.)

ATLANTIC

xy–FREDERICTON _ Meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers. (8:30 a.m. at Delta Fredericton)

MONCTON, N.B. _ Inquiry into what led the Miramichi Regional Health Authority to review more than 220 breast and prostate cancer tests. Through May 13. (University of Moncton)

GANDER, N.L. _ Newfoundland and Labrador Environment Minister Charlene Johnson and provincial Municipal Affairs Minister Dave Denine will release a drinking water safety plan for rural communities. (11:30 a.m. at Albatross Hotel, Salon D)

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. _ Trial for Ashley Weadon, charged in the beating death of 29–year–old Richard Brace. Through May 30. (Newfoundland and Labrador Supreme Court, Duckworth St.)

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. _ Egale Canada holds a news conference on research into homophobia in Canadian schools. (10:30 a.m. at The Lantern, 35 Barnes Rd.)

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. _ Michael Goldberg of the U.S. to appear in court for a bail hearing. Goldberg is charged with fraud. (Provincial court)

STEPHENVILLE, N.L. _ Court appearance for Christopher Sawicki, charged with first–degree murder, arson and auto theft in the death of a 57–year–old man. (9:30 a.m. at Provincial Court)

ANTIGONISH, N.S. _ N.S. environment minister makes announcement about climate change. (10 a.m. at Charles V. Keating Millennium Centre, St. Francis Xavier University)

HALIFAX _ More than 200 health professionals from across Canada and the United States attend annual conference of the Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology. (7 p.m. at Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel)

HALIFAX _ Atlantic Conference on Disaster Management. (Westin Nova Scotian hotel)

HALIFAX _ More than 300 people living with cancer, family members and health-care providers attend Canadian Cancer Society conference. (Westin Nova Scotian)

HALIFAX _ High Liner Foods Inc. holds annual meeting at 11:30 a.m. followed by first-quarter earnings conference call at 3 p.m. Dial 416-644-3429 or 1-800-814-4859. Webcast at www.highlinerfoods.com (Neptune Theatre, 1593 Argyle)

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y-TRENTON, Ont. _ Repatriation ceremony for Cpl. Michael Starker, who was killed Tuesday in an ambush in Afghanistan. Members of the media will not be allowed on the tarmac. (2 p.m. at CFB Trenton/8 Wing)

WELLAND, Ont. _ Special Senate Committee on Aging holds public hearing. (9 a.m. at Rose City Seniors' Activity Centre, gymnasium 145 Lincoln St.)

WINCHESTER, Ont. _ Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry MPP Jim Brownell announces regional winners of Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. (7 p.m. at Township of North Dundas Council Chambers, 636 St. Lawrence St.)

PRAIRIES

CALGARY _ Canadian Natural Resources discusses first-quarter results, released a day earlier, in analyst conference call. Dial in at 1-877-461-2816. (9 a.m.)

CALGARY _ The Canadian Parks for Tomorrow: 40th Anniversary Conference looks to define appropriate directions for parks and protected areas in the 21st century in light of water scarcity, species management in changing habitats, climate change and an evolving human use pattern. (9 a.m. at University of Calgary)

CALGARY _ Arraignment for Marko Miljevic of Calgary who is charged with second degree murder in the pickaxe death of a city teen. Seventeen-year-old Matt McKay was killed last Sept. 29th, when he was struck in the face with a pickaxe shortly before midnight at a house party he was attending. (10 a.m. at Calgary Courts)

CALGARY _ Ember Resources reports first-quarter earnings before markets open followed by conference call. Dial 1-866-334-3876 or go to www.emberresources.com (11 a.m.)

CALGARY _ Children and Youth Services Minister Janis Tarchuk announces how the government will help communities create more child care space. (12:30 p.m. at 255 Barclay Parade SW)

EDMONTON _ Trial for a 19-year-old girl charged with first-degree murder, sexual assault and kidnapping in the death of Nina Courtepatte. (Room 417, Court of Queen's Bench)

EDMONTON _ Eveready Income Fund, provider of industrial and oilfield services, will review first-quarter earnings at conference call. Webcast at www.evereadyincomefund.com (9 a.m.)

x-EDMONTON _ An Edmonton judge is expected to hand down a sentence for a 20-year-old woman, who was convicted of manslaughter in the slaying of Nina Courtepatte, 13, on an Edmonton-area golf course. The accused was 17 at the time of the killing in 2005. (9:30 a.m. at Court of Queen's Bench)

EDMONTON _ A federal-provincial announcement on international trade and technology partnerships will be made by Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Rona Ambrose and Technology Minister Doug Horner. (9:30 a.m. at 9990 Jasper Ave.)

EDMONTON _ Alberta government increases funding for victims of crime support programs by \$3 million. (11 a.m. at 9620 103A Ave.)

EDMONTON _ Epcor holds its annual general meeting. Protesters from Rewild Alberta! plan to produce 1,000 origami snow geese at the meeting. (11:30 a.m. at Fairmont Hotel Macdonald)

MEDICINE HAT, Alta. _ Colin Winsor to be sentenced after being found guilty in the slaying of Brooks, Alta., teenager Ashton Moen. (10 a.m. at Court of Queen's Bench)

PEACE RIVER, Alta. _ Trial date to be set for Stanley Willier, 51, in the February 2005 stabbing death of Brenda Moreside, 44, of High Prairie, Alta. This will be the second trial for Willier, he was acquitted of second-degree murder, but Court of Appeal ordered a new trial. (Court of Queen's Bench)

RED DEER, Alta. _ Charles Richard Becket appears in court charged with accessory after the fact to murder in connection with the death of Sheldon Mark Hiller, whose body was found in a ditch April 17. (Provincial court)

y-WINNIPEG _ Canadian Pacific Railway holds its annual general meeting. (9 a.m. at The Fairmont

Winnipeg, 2 Lombard Place)

WINNIPEG _ Ag Growth Income Fund will review quarterly earnings ending March 31 at conference call. Dial 1-866-322-2356. (1:30 p.m.)

SASKATOON _ Trial for Larry McLeod, charged with first-degree murder in the death of Anna Hein, 92, in July 1999. Through May 9. (Court of Queen's Bench)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

VANCOUVER _ The Punjabi Press Club of BC holds a candlelight vigil in memory of journalists who lost their lives in the line of duty. (7 p.m. at Vancouver Art Gallery steps)

BURNABY, B.C. _ Metro Vancouver safety fair featuring demos of high angle rescues, fire safety and eye protection. (11 a.m. at Lake City on Production Way)

KAMLOOPS, B.C. _ Premier Gordon Campbell speaks at 50th annual Interior Logging Association Trades Convention in Kamloops at 11 a.m., followed by 2 p.m. speech at North Central Municipal Association's 53rd annual general meeting in Prince George and 3:30 p.m. funding announcement for Prince George community project. (11 a.m. at Grand Hall, TRU Campus Activity Centre, 900 McGill Rd.)

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. _ North Central Municipal Association annual general meeting attracts more than 250 delegates from 100 Mile House to the Yukon border. Through May 9. (10 a.m. at Convention Centre)

RICHMOND, B.C. _ Federal Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and provincial Public Safety Minister John van Dongen make announcement about infrastructure. (1:30 p.m. at Gulf of Georgia Cannery, 12138-Fourth Ave. at Chatham)

VANCOUVER _ Trial of five men accused of kidnapping university student Graham McMynn. Trial expected to run into July. (10 a.m. at B.C. Supreme Court, courtroom 20)

VANCOUVER _ Defence lawyers for former government aides Dave Basi and Bobby Virk argue over disclosure matters in case related to B.C. legislature raid. Through May 16. (9 a.m. at B.C. Supreme Court)

x-VANCOUVER _ The first phase of the two-phase Braidwood Inquiry into Tasers. This phase examines the use of Tasers in general. The second phase will look at Tasers in connection with the death of Robert Dziekanski at Vancouver International Airport. Through May 23. (9 a.m. at Residence Inn by Marriott)

VANCOUVER _ Inquiry into death of aboriginal man who froze to death after being dumped in an alley by a police officer. (9:30 a.m. at 605 Robson St.)

y-VANCOUVER _ Nurses hold news conference at Insite to support continuation of services. (9 a.m. at Insite clinic, 139 E. Hastings St.)

VANCOUVER _ Pivot Legal Society holds news conference to discuss concerns about how it believes amendments to B.C.'s Elections Act will increase barriers for homeless and low-income people to vote. (10 a.m. at 678 E. Hastings)

VANCOUVER _ MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates Ltd. holds its annual general meeting. (1:30 p.m. at Head Office, 13800 Commerce Parkway)

WESTBANK, B.C. _ Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon makes announcement with Westbank First

Nation Chief Robert Louie. (10 a.m. at North (Lakeside) roundabout of Campbell River Rd. Interchange)

(The Canadian Press _ Toronto)

INDEX:Advisories

DATE: 2008.05.08
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 514

HL:The Canadian Press World News Budget – Thursday, May 8, 2008

Here are the budgeted stories as of 23:00 ET. The editor handling World news in Toronto can be reached at 416-507-2165.

YANGON, Myanmar _ Myanmar's military government allowed in the first major international aid shipment Thursday, but it snubbed a U.S. offer to help cyclone victims struggling to recover from a tragedy of unimaginable scale. 1,200 words. See AP Photos. BC-Myanmar-Cyclone. EDS: Incorporates BC-Myanmar-Cyclone-US. Moved.

BENY-REVIERS, France _ Could this be the end of France's policy of non-interference toward Quebec's position in Canada? French President Nicolas Sarkozy let it be known Thursday he wants to have a hand in drawing Canada and Quebec closer together and he's not interested in choosing between them. 450 words. By Michel Dolbec. BC-Cda-Que-Sarkozy. Moved.

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba _ A U.S. military judge threatened to suspend the war-crimes trial of a Canadian detainee, scolding the government Thursday for failing to provide records of his confinement at Guantanamo. Lawyers for Omar Khadr say details of his interrogations and mental health could provide grounds to suppress self-incriminating statements at the U.S. navy base in southeast Cuba. Khadr is accused of killing a U.S. soldier in Afghanistan. 500 words. BC-Guantanamo-Cda-Khadr. Moved.

WASHINGTON _ As Barack Obama increasingly focuses on beating John McCain to the White House this fall, Republicans are plotting how they'd try to stop him and whether he'd be a tougher adversary than Hillary Clinton. 650 words. By Beth Gorham. See Photos. BC-US-Obama-Republicans. Moved.

Also: BC-Obama-McCain

BC-Clinton-Obama

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ The ambush that took the life of Cpl. Michael Starker unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, much to the horror and dismay of his fellow soldiers. Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, a medic and friend of Starker's for 10 years, tried to prepare the others for the worst, telling them: "You know a gunshot wound is never a good thing." 750 words. By Murray Brewster. See CP Photo. BC-Afghan-Cda-Medic. Moved.

BEIRUT _ Lebanon's political rivals battled with automatic rifles and grenades on the streets of the capital Thursday in the second consecutive day of fighting between mostly Sunni supporters of the U.S.-backed government and Shiites allied with the opposition Hezbollah movement. The violence also spread outside the capital, with rival groups exchanging gunfire in the strategic village of Saadnayel in the eastern Bekaa Valley. 1,100 words. By Zeina Karam. See AP Photos. BC-Lebanon-Protests. Moved.

NEWARK, N.J. _ Police detained a suspected pedophile in New Jersey on Thursday, just two days after Interpol made a rare appeal for public help in the international manhunt to catch him. The arrest of Wayne

Nelson Corliss, 58, suspected of sexually abusing at least three boys from Southeast Asia, was reminiscent of the case involving Christopher Paul Neil, a 32-year-old Canadian arrested in Thailand after a similar appeal by the international police agency. 600 words. By John Leicester. See AP Photo. BC-Interpol-Manhunt. Moved.

Top stories and photo for Thursday, May 8

DATE: 2008.05.08
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 348

TOP PHOTO

OTTAWA _ OTTH107 (vertical) – Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier receives a standing ovation from Conservative MPs after stating his private life is nobody's business in the House of Commons.

TOP STORIES:

SPOTLIGHT ON A MINISTER'S COMPANION

OTTAWA _ The minister's girlfriend always stood out in the genteel diplomatic crowd that inhabits the Foreign Affairs building. It wasn't how she smoked cigarettes in an ambassador's limousine or strode into the Lester B. Pearson building in tall leather boots, tight jeans, and snapping bubble gum that garnered the most attention. It was the influence Julie Couillard was said to have on the foreign affairs minister. By Alexander Panetta. BC–Couillard–Spotlight.

“A GUNSHOT WOUND IS NEVER A GOOD THING”

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FRENCH PRESIDENT WANTS CANADA AND QUEBEC CLOSER TOGETHER

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THE BUZZ...

FIRED TIMBIT–GIVER GETS JOB BACK

LONDON, Ont. _ After being fired for giving away a Timbit to a baby and hastily reinstated when the doughy dilemma hit the media, single mom Nicole Lilliman said Thursday she'll collect her much–needed Tim Hortons paycheque until she can find work elsewhere. While still anxious to work in a customer service job, the 27–year–old mother of four young children said she fears her career with the iconic Canadian purveyor of coffee and doughnuts has been irreparably harmed _ despite a chance to work at a new outlet. BC–ODDITY–Timbit–Firing.

The Canadian Press News Agenda for Friday, May 9

DATE: 2008.05.08
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 2237

EDITORS: Following is a list of news events for May 9 as of 11:45 p.m. ET: x–denotes wire, y–denotes picture, z–denotes graphics coverage. Copy from other events based on merit and availability. All times local unless otherwise noted. Queries about these events and stories in The Canadian Press report should be directed to the departments listed below (all phone numbers 416 area code):

Main Desk (National News) 507–2150; World Desk 507–2165; Sports Desk 507–2154; Ontario Desk 507–2159; Photo Desk 507–2169; Specials Desk (Syndicated Copy) 507–2152; IT Desk (Technical Trouble) 507–2099 or 800–268–8149

WORLD

BORDEAUX _ Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean meets with Bordeaux Mayor Alain Juppé. (Palais Rohan, 3:30 p.m. French time). (9:30 a.m.)

ATLANTIC

xy–FREDERICTON _ Meeting of the Council of Atlantic Premiers. (8:30 a.m. at Delta Fredericton)

MONCTON, N.B. _ Inquiry into what led the Miramichi Regional Health Authority to review more than 220 breast and prostate cancer tests. Through May 13. (University of Moncton)

GANDER, N.L. _ Newfoundland and Labrador Environment Minister Charlene Johnson and provincial Municipal Affairs Minister Dave Denine will release a drinking water safety plan for rural communities. (11:30 a.m. at Albatross Hotel, Salon D)

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. _ Trial for Ashley Weadon, charged in the beating death of 29–year–old Richard Brace. Through May 30. (Newfoundland and Labrador Supreme Court, Duckworth St.)

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. _ Egale Canada holds a news conference on research into homophobia in Canadian schools. (10:30 a.m. at The Lantern, 35 Barnes Rd.)

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. _ Michael Goldberg of the U.S. to appear in court for a bail hearing. Goldberg is charged with fraud. (Provincial court)

STEPHENVILLE, N.L. _ Court appearance for Christopher Sawicki, charged with first–degree murder, arson and auto theft in the death of a 57–year–old man. (9:30 a.m. at Provincial Court)

ANTIGONISH, N.S. _ N.S. environment minister makes announcement about climate change. (10 a.m. at Charles V. Keating Millennium Centre, St. Francis Xavier University)

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x-TORONTO _ Annual general meeting of The Canadian Press. Lunch at 12 noon, meeting starts at 12:30 p.m. (12 p.m. at Regatta Room, Toronto Westin Harbour Castle Hotel)

TORONTO _ Country's top prizes for journalism to be handed out at 59th annual National Newspaper Awards. (5 p.m. at Westin Harbour Castle Hilton Hotel, 1 Harbour Sq.)

TORONTO _ GMP Capital Trust first-quarter earnings conference call at 9 a.m. Dial 416-644-3418. The annual meeting follows at 11 a.m. at Le Windsor, 1170 Peel St.

y-TRENTON, Ont. _ Repatriation ceremony for Cpl. Michael Starker, who was killed Tuesday in an ambush in Afghanistan. Members of the media will not be allowed on the tarmac. (2 p.m. at CFB Trenton/8 Wing)

WELLAND, Ont. _ Special Senate Committee on Aging holds public hearing. (9 a.m. at Rose City Seniors' Activity Centre, gymnasium 145 Lincoln St.)

WINCHESTER, Ont. _ Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry MPP Jim Brownell announces regional winners of Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. (7 p.m. at Township of North Dundas Council Chambers, 636 St. Lawrence St.)

PRAIRIES

CALGARY _ Canadian Natural Resources discusses first-quarter results, released a day earlier, in analyst conference call. Dial in at 1-877-461-2816. (9 a.m.)

CALGARY _ The Canadian Parks for Tomorrow: 40th Anniversary Conference looks to define appropriate directions for parks and protected areas in the 21st century in light of water scarcity, species management in changing habitats, climate change and an evolving human use pattern. (9 a.m. at University of Calgary)

CALGARY _ Arraignment for Marko Miljevic of Calgary who is charged with second degree murder in the pickaxe death of a city teen. Seventeen-year-old Matt McKay was killed last Sept. 29th, when he was struck in the face with a pickaxe shortly before midnight at a house party he was attending. (10 a.m. at Calgary Courts)

CALGARY _ Ember Resources reports first-quarter earnings before markets open followed by conference call. Dial 1-866-334-3876 or go to www.emberresources.com (11 a.m.)

CALGARY _ Children and Youth Services Minister Janis Tarchuk announces how the government will help communities create more child care space. (12:30 p.m. at 255 Barclay Parade SW)

EDMONTON _ Trial for a 19-year-old girl charged with first-degree murder, sexual assault and kidnapping in the death of Nina Courtepatte. (Room 417, Court of Queen's Bench)

EDMONTON _ Eveready Income Fund, provider of industrial and oilfield services, will review first-quarter earnings at conference call. Webcast at www.evereadyincomefund.com (9 a.m.)

x-EDMONTON _ An Edmonton judge is expected to hand down a sentence for a 20-year-old woman, who was convicted of manslaughter in the slaying of Nina Courtepatte, 13, on an Edmonton-area golf course. The accused was 17 at the time of the killing in 2005. (9:30 a.m. at Court of Queen's Bench)

EDMONTON _ A federal-provincial announcement on international trade and technology partnerships will be made by Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Rona Ambrose and Technology Minister Doug Horner. (9:30 a.m. at 9990 Jasper Ave.)

EDMONTON _ Alberta government increases funding for victims of crime support programs by \$3 million. (11 a.m. at 9620 103A Ave.)

EDMONTON _ Epcor holds its annual general meeting. Protesters from Rewild Alberta! plan to produce 1,000 origami snow geese at the meeting. (11:30 a.m. at Fairmont Hotel Macdonald)

MEDICINE HAT, Alta. _ Colin Winsor to be sentenced after being found guilty in the slaying of Brooks, Alta., teenager Ashton Moen. (10 a.m. at Court of Queen's Bench)

PEACE RIVER, Alta. _ Trial date to be set for Stanley Willier, 51, in the February 2005 stabbing death of Brenda Moreside, 44, of High Prairie, Alta. This will be the second trial for Willier, he was acquitted of second-degree murder, but Court of Appeal ordered a new trial. (Court of Queen's Bench)

RED DEER, Alta. _ Charles Richard Becket appears in court charged with accessory after the fact to murder in connection with the death of Sheldon Mark Hiller, whose body was found in a ditch April 17. (Provincial court)

y-WINNIPEG _ Canadian Pacific Railway holds its annual general meeting. (9 a.m. at The Fairmont

Winnipeg, 2 Lombard Place)

WINNIPEG _ Ag Growth Income Fund will review quarterly earnings ending March 31 at conference call. Dial 1-866-322-2356. (1:30 p.m.)

SASKATOON _ Trial for Larry McLeod, charged with first-degree murder in the death of Anna Hein, 92, in July 1999. Through May 9. (Court of Queen's Bench)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

VANCOUVER _ The Punjabi Press Club of BC holds a candlelight vigil in memory of journalists who lost their lives in the line of duty. (7 p.m. at Vancouver Art Gallery steps)

BURNABY, B.C. _ Metro Vancouver safety fair featuring demos of high angle rescues, fire safety and eye protection. (11 a.m. at Lake City on Production Way)

KAMLOOPS, B.C. _ Premier Gordon Campbell speaks at 50th annual Interior Logging Association Trades Convention in Kamloops at 11 a.m., followed by 2 p.m. speech at North Central Municipal Association's 53rd annual general meeting in Prince George and 3:30 p.m. funding announcement for Prince George community project. (11 a.m. at Grand Hall, TRU Campus Activity Centre, 900 McGill Rd.)

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. _ North Central Municipal Association annual general meeting attracts more than 250 delegates from 100 Mile House to the Yukon border. Through May 9. (10 a.m. at Convention Centre)

RICHMOND, B.C. _ Federal Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and provincial Public Safety Minister John van Dongen make announcement about infrastructure. (1:30 p.m. at Gulf of Georgia Cannery, 12138-Fourth Ave. at Chatham)

VANCOUVER _ Trial of five men accused of kidnapping university student Graham McMynn. Trial expected to run into July. (10 a.m. at B.C. Supreme Court, courtroom 20)

VANCOUVER _ Defence lawyers for former government aides Dave Basi and Bobby Virk argue over disclosure matters in case related to B.C. legislature raid. Through May 16. (9 a.m. at B.C. Supreme Court)

x-VANCOUVER _ The first phase of the two-phase Braidwood Inquiry into Tasers. This phase examines the use of Tasers in general. The second phase will look at Tasers in connection with the death of Robert Dziekanski at Vancouver International Airport. Through May 23. (9 a.m. at Residence Inn by Marriott)

VANCOUVER _ Inquiry into death of aboriginal man who froze to death after being dumped in an alley by a police officer. (9:30 a.m. at 605 Robson St.)

y-VANCOUVER _ Nurses hold news conference at Insite to support continuation of services. (9 a.m. at Insite clinic, 139 E. Hastings St.)

VANCOUVER _ Pivot Legal Society holds news conference to discuss concerns about how it believes amendments to B.C.'s Elections Act will increase barriers for homeless and low-income people to vote. (10 a.m. at 678 E. Hastings)

VANCOUVER _ MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates Ltd. holds its annual general meeting. (1:30 p.m. at Head Office, 13800 Commerce Parkway)

WESTBANK, B.C. _ Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon makes announcement with Westbank First

Nation Chief Robert Louie. (10 a.m. at North (Lakeside) roundabout of Campbell River Rd. Interchange)

(The Canadian Press _ Toronto)

INDEX:Defence, International, Politics

DATE: 2008.05.08
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 129

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ A long-time friend of the latest Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan looks back on that day with horror and dismay.

The ambush that killed Corporal Michael Starker on Tuesday unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, where Master Corporal Fabio Lacentra was stationed.

Lacentra had known Starker for 10 years and served with him both in the reserves and as emergency medical technicians in Calgary.

He didn't know at the time that his friend had been shot, but Lacentra says his commander told him there were wounded, and that it was bad.

Thirty-six-year-old Starker was evacuated by helicopter to the NATO military hospital at Kandahar Airfield along with a second unidentified soldier, who was also wounded.

Tuesday's ambush was the first shooting death of a Canadian soldier in direct combat with the enemy in almost 20 months.

It's still under investigation by military police.

(The Canadian Press)

--Fifteenth NewsWatch--

DATE: 2008.05.08

KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 288

An American aid official says the U-S could try air-dropping supplies to victims of the Myanmar cyclone, even without permission from the country's military rulers.

But Defence Secretary Robert Gates says that may not be a realistic plan.

The U-S foreign disaster aid director had said that's one way to get food, water and other help to victims of last weekend's devastating storm. (15)

(Bernier-Couillard)

Opposition members spent much of Question Period debating whether Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier's relationship with his ex-girlfriend was a security risk.

Julie Couillard was linked romantically to an associate of Hells Angels boss Maurice Boucher, and was once married to a member of the Rockers biker gang.

Prime Minister Harper brushed off the matter and accused the opposition of being ``gossipy old busybodies." (15)

(Safe-Injection) (Audio:153)

Drug users will needlessly die if the Harper government decides to close Vancouver's safe-injection site when its licence expires June 30th.

That's the opinion of Sharon Clarke, executive director of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation.

Recent research suggests the safe-injection site has reduced harm while cutting health and police costs.

Health Minister Tony Clement says he's reviewing it. (15)

(Afghan-Cda-Border)

Omar Samad, Afghanistan's ambassador to Canada, hopes security improves along that country's border with Pakistan, after a change of government there.

Opponents of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf formed a coalition after sweeping general elections in February.

The area just inside the Pakistan border is considered a prime recruiting and training region for the Taliban. (15)

(Afghan-Cda-Medic)

Tuesday, the day the latest Canadian soldier died in Afghanistan, will always be remembered by Master Corporal Fabio Lacentra with horror and dismay.

He was stationed near the ambush that killed Corporal Michael Starker, a decade-long friend.

Lacentra didn't know at the time that his friend had been shot, but he says his commander told him there were wounded, and that it was bad. (15)

(ENT-Obit-Arnold)

Eddy Arnold is being remembered for his mellow baritone and a music career that spanned 60 years.

The country music pioneer died earlier today, a few days short of his 90th birthday.

Arnold's vocals on songs like "Make the World Go Away" made him one of history's most successful country singers.

The late Dinah Shore once compared his voice to "warm butter and syrup" poured on buttermilk pancakes. (15)

(NewsWatch by Chris Mayberry)

Medic's death hits fellow soldiers hard; Friend recalls horror of ambush that unfolded within sight of Canadian forward operating base

IDNUMBER 200805090066
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A23
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
SOURCE: THE CANADIAN PRESS
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WORD COUNT: 236

The ambush that took the life of Cpl. Michael Starker unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, much to the horror and dismay of his fellow soldiers and a long-time friend.

Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, 40, had known Starker for 10 years, serving with him both in the reserves and as emergency medical technicians in Calgary.

The sharp crackle of the fierce exchange was the first indication to troops at Masum Ghar, about 35 kilometres west of Kandahar, that something was up.

"We could see it from where we were; we could see the firefight going on," said Lacentra, a medic with the 15th Field Ambulance evacuation platoon.

The radio began to chatter.

There were wounded.

"We knew it was Canadians and I guess I was, without even consciously doing it, was trying to prepare these guys. I just said that kind of gunshot wound doesn't end up with a good result."

At the time, Lacentra didn't know his friend had been hit, the guy with whom he had worked out at the gym every day during training in Edmonton, the guy whom he clearly looked up to as a paramedic, a soldier and a person of "amazing character and strength."

Starker, 36, was evacuated by helicopter to the NATO military hospital at Kandahar Airfield along with a second unidentified soldier, who was also wounded. Doctors pronounced Starker dead at the Role 3 treatment centre.

The ambush on Tuesday, the first shooting death of a Canadian soldier in direct combat with the enemy in almost 20 months, is still under investigation by military police.

Pal witnessed fatal ambush Rare attack on foot patrol unfolded within sight of Canadian forward operating base

SOURCETAG: 0805090666
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 18
ILLUSTRATION: photo of MICHAEL STARKER Medic died in attack on Tuesday
BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, THE CANADIAN PRESS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 199

The ambush that took the life of Sgt. Michael Starker unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, much to the dismay of fellow soldiers and a close friend.

Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, 40, had known Starker for 10 years, serving with him both in the reserves and as paramedics in Calgary.

The sharp crackle of the fierce exchange was the first indication to troops at Masum Ghar, about 35 km west of Kandahar, that something was up. "We could see it from where we were; we could see the firefight going on," said Lacentra, a medic with the 15th Field Ambulance evacuation platoon.

The radio began to chatter.

There were wounded.

How bad?

"I didn't believe it was him because I know how well trained Mike is. He's an ex-sniper. I just kept thinking it was someone else because there was no way Mike would get shot that way," Lacentra said with tears in his eyes.

Starker, 36, was evacuated by helicopter to the NATO military hospital at Kandahar Airfield along with a second unidentified soldier, who was also wounded.

The sudden brutality of the ambush that killed his friend is hard to reconcile with the faces of grateful, dirt poor Afghans who cheer on the Canadians when they pass.

"You see lots of kids, waving at you, happy and smiling; even adults. And you don't feel there's any real danger.

"Watching the firefight changed my perspective," he said. KEYWORDS=CANADA

Friend witnessed deadly ambush AFGHANISTAN: Attack came within sight of Canadians' forward operating base

SOURCETAG 0805091015

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2008.05.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: B3

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Murray Brewster, CP Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra of the 5th Field Ambulance Regiment, shown in Kandahar yesterday, witnessed the ambush that killed his friend, Canadian medic Sgt. Michael Starker on Tuesday.

BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORD COUNT: 509

The ambush that took the life of Cpl. Michael Starker unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, much to the horror and dismay of his fellow soldiers and a long-time friend.

Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra had known Starker for 10 years, serving with him both in the reserves and as emergency medical technicians in Calgary.

The sharp crackle of the fierce exchange was the first indication to troops at Masum Ghar, about 35 kilometres west of Kandahar, that something was up. "We could see it from where we were; we could see the firefight going on," said Lacentra, a medic with the 15th Field Ambulance evacuation platoon.

He was standing in the command post when the base commander ran out and mounted one of the bastion's walls to get a view of what was going on.

"You could see his concern," Lacentra recalled in an interview yesterday with The CP.

The radio began to chatter.

There were wounded.

How bad?

When the answer came back, Lacentra turned to the soldiers beside him. "I said: 'You know a gunshot wound is never a good thing.'"

His training as an ambulance technician had kicked in. "We knew it was Canadians and I guess I was, without even consciously doing it, was trying to prepare these guys. I just said that kind of gunshot wound doesn't end up with a good result."

At the time, Lacentra didn't know it was his friend, the guy with whom he had worked out at the gym every day during training in Edmonton, the guy whom he clearly looked up to as a paramedic, a soldier and a person of "amazing character and strength."

Starker, 36, was evacuated by helicopter to the NATO military hospital at Kandahar Airfield along with a second soldier, who was also wounded. Doctors pronounced Starker dead at the treatment centre.

The ambush on Tuesday, the first shooting death of a Canadian soldier in direct combat with the enemy in almost 20 months, is still under investigation.

It was very quiet that evening in the vehicle when Lacentra drove with other troops back to the airfield, where the majority of Canada's 2,500 troops in Afghanistan are stationed.

Once in a while, the cheerful Italian-immigrant to Canada likes to sing in the car. "So when we got just close to KAF actually one of the guys said: 'Hey Fabio why don't you sing us a song.' "

He did, but his heart was only in it for a few minutes.

His mind was on Starker.

"I kind of knew it was him, but I hoped it was somebody else . . . That's not a good thing to say," he added with tears welling.

"I know how well trained Mike is. He's an ex-sniper. I just kept thinking it was someone else because there was no way Mike would get shot that way."

Back inside the wire, he heard the news. It struck like a bolt of lightning.

He had seen Starker only last Saturday when they spent four hours together unloading medical supplies.

Since his friend's death, Lacentra has spent a lot of time thinking about the ambulance calls the two of them occasionally went on together in Calgary.

Starker, a reservist and ex-paratrooper, had personal reasons for returning to Afghanistan, Lacentra said. "He didn't have to be here, but he wanted to serve."

Lacentra, who served as a peacekeeper in 1992 as the Balkans was coming apart at the seams, is by no means naive about the risks.

But the sudden brutality of the ambush that killed his friend is hard to reconcile with the faces of grateful, dirt poor Afghans who cheer on the Canadians when they pass.

"Watching the firefight changed my perspective" about the country, he said. "It made things more real."

"You see lots of kids, waving at you; happy and smiling; even adults. And you don't feel there's any real danger. You know what's happened. You hear about some of the stuff that's happened, but you don't feel it at that moment in time." KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Soldiers at base had clear view of ambush

SOURCETAG: 0805090464
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 36
ILLUSTRATION: photo by Larry MacDougal, The Canadian Press Cpl. Michael Starker is seen here posing beside a Calgary ambulance last January just before leaving to serve as a paramedic in Afghanistan.
BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, THE CANADIAN PRESS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 201

The ambush that took the life of Cpl. Michael Starker unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, much to the horror and dismay of his fellow soldiers and a long-time friend.

Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, 40, had known Starker for 10 years, serving with him both in the reserves and as emergency medical technicians in Calgary.

The sharp crackle of the fierce exchange was the first indication to troops at Masum Ghar, about 35 km west of Kandahar, that something was up. "We could see it from where we were; we could see the firefight going on," said Lacentra, a medic with the 15th Field Ambulance evacuation platoon.

He was standing in the command post when the base commander mounted one of the bastion's walls to get a view of what was going on.

"You could see his concern," Lacentra recalled in an interview yesterday with The Canadian Press.

The radio began to chatter.

There were wounded.

At the time, Lacentra didn't know it was his friend, the guy with whom he had worked out at the gym every day during training in Edmonton, the guy whom he clearly looked up to as a paramedic, a soldier and a person of "amazing character and strength."

Starker, 36, was evacuated by helicopter to the NATO military hospital at Kandahar Airfield along with a second unidentified soldier, who was also wounded.

Doctors pronounced Starker dead.

The ambush on Tuesday is still under investigation by military police. KEYWORDS=CANADA

Ed fed up with UN Kyoto-compliance bullying undeserved in face of Alberta's efforts in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0805090440
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 7
BYLINE: NEIL WAUGH, EDMONTON SUN
COLUMN: The Province
WORD COUNT: 473

It comes winging out of nowhere, posted on an obscure United Nations website: Shape up or they will ship us out – and Stephen Harper and Ed Stelmach have five weeks to do it.

Maybe even less.

The document is written in a weird and garbled English that only a UN bureaucrat fermented in the juices of his own bullspit could fully understand.

They're the most useless bureaucrats in the world, by the way, because they report to no real politicians.

But they threaten us with "consequences" if we don't knuckle under and give the Kyoto protocol's Compliance Committee what it is demanding: A national registry of greenhouse gas credits.

We could be declared in "non-compliance" and ordered to submit a plan to address the problem within a three-month deadline.

But worst of all, we could be banned from international carbon credit trading and effectively kicked out of Kyoto.

There's not a dry eye in the house down at the Alberta legislature. Premier Ed Stelmach speaks for many.

"We have taken action," he says. But first, he wants to take reporters on a trip down memory lane when Jean Chretien ruled the land, mainly on a program of Alberta bashing.

"It was signed by a prime minister who did not consult with the provinces," Stelmach spat. "And did not consult with his own cabinet members."

He just flew off to Africa and sighed the deal being pushed by a bunch of Euro-trash countries who had no consequences. Then, for 10 years, did nothing about it.

"And now we're playing catch-up."

But Steady Eddie has another bone to pick with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon before he gets too far down Intimidation Alley.

"Does it bother me a bit?" the premier continued. "Yes, it does."

Ed fed up with UN Kyoto-compliance bullying undeserved in face of Alberta's efforts in Afghanistan 39

An interesting letter falls into my hands. It's from the Great Moon Pie himself, to his Security Council bosses.

It contains a report from NATO secretary general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, where the western world's No. 1 warlord provides the Security Councillors an update on the International Security Assistance Force – the pointy end of the stick that's under UN orders to bring peace and love to Afghanistan. Things aren't going well, de Hoop Scheffer laments.

"Opposing militant forces have continued their attempts to disrupt, frustrate and destroy the process of establishing peace and security in Afghanistan."

He talks about "asymmetric tactics" (roadside bombs) and southern and eastern regions where "reported activity continues to be the highest."

He specifically identifies how enemy activities are "focused on disrupting ISAF movements along Highway 1."

Later today, the latest victim of these "asymmetric tactics" comes out of the back end of a Canadian Forces transport in Trenton, Ont.

There will be bagpipes and tears for Cpl. Michael Starker, the 83rd Canadian who has given his life in Ban Ki-moon's war – a disproportionate number of which are Alberta-based soldiers. The Calgary paramedic is described as a "good man," a reservist call-up who "made a choice to make the world a better place."

That's what Stelmach means when he says it "bothers" him when UN snapheads try to heavy Albertans and start imposing deadlines.

"At the same time, we're protecting the backs of the Americans in Iraq," the premier said. "And we're in Afghanistan."

Southern and eastern Afghanistan, to be precise.

"And we just lost another soldier. We're there because of the United Nations' request for peace," he continued, praising Canadian Forces members for "maintaining peace, order and hoping to rebuild Afghanistan during this critical period."

"While at the same time, I haven't heard of too many countries lining up to follow Canada's lead and our sacrifice in Afghanistan."

That's including the Euros, who are so keen to push Kyoto on Canada and Alberta.

"That's why I personally have some of these issues with the United Nations," the premier snapped.

Especially when considering Finance Minister Iris Evans booked revenues of \$92 million for "climate change and emissions management" in her budget.

"It's working," Stelmach says of Alberta greenhouse gas plan.

But the UN still wants to make mischief. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Ed fed up with UN Kyoto-compliance bullying undeserved in face of Alberta's efforts in Afghanistan 40

What price sacrifice?

SOURCETAG 0805090891
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 15
BYLINE: BILL KAUFMANN
WORD COUNT: 446

Though expected, the first volley of the salute to the dead fired into October's gun-grey sky was startling.

That's as it should be, that crack and reactive cringe on the Stampede grounds as an echo of the trauma of war in a distant land.

Seven months after the funeral of Cpl. Nathan Hornburg, those volleys will resound over Calgary again and we'll hear more testimonies to the valour of the latest fallen --- and they'll be true.

But is it enough?

Is it enough we hear from our prime minister, in the same formulaic cadence, that another soldier has made the ultimate sacrifice for a vague prospect of freedom and democracy somewhere, sometime down a long, winding and murky Afghan road?

This is Afghanistan, not the tidy, tiny and merely nettlesome island of Cyprus.

Recently, a writer for Salon.com discovered some of the billions in U.S. greenbacks being shipped to our Pakistani allies are being siphoned off to arm and train the Taliban.

The people killing NATO troops, including Canadians, are being indirectly funded by our American friends, with U.S. and Afghan intelligence sources confirming it. The most troubling aspect of this story is it's no longer shocking. It wasn't even big news.

Does Stephen Harper even know this? Would it matter if he did? How would he respond to George W. Bush's pat on the back for Canada's perseverance in Afghanistan?

More than likely, it's still "thanks, George, the feeling is mutual."

Edmontonian Paul Franklin, who lost both legs to a roadside Afghan bomb in 2006 possibly funded through unintended sources in Pakistan was told about the Taliban greenbacks.

At first he chuckled, maybe as a defence mechanism. Then he spoke the obvious: "Pakistan's the key, there's only so much we can do ... unless Pakistan is cleaned up, it might take a while."

There are no plans to "clean up" Pakistan --- quite the contrary. Our allies in Islamabad are busy cutting deals with our foes.

Yet Franklin says: "I'd gladly give up my legs to go through what I've done. For me, it was worth it."

Soldiers see the good they're doing within the confines of their own experience and that's to be expected.

If they looked further afield, the sight wouldn't be pretty. Just 10 days before the death of Calgarian Michael Starker in an area repeatedly cleared of guerrillas, Afghan President Hamid Karzai chastised the West for going after the Taliban, saying such actions are undermining his regime and chances for peace.

At the same time, his security apparatchiks admitted they had previous knowledge of the April 27 attempt on Karzai's life --- one obviously made with inside help.

Meanwhile, our government's either denied or denounced apparent efforts by Canadian troops to parlay with the Taliban.

Maybe Harper and Peter MacKay, who lament Canadians aren't getting the real picture of our mission, can enlighten us on what exactly is going on.

Last weekend, a Globe article detailed starkly what we've long known --- that corruption among the Afghan government is hobbling Canada's efforts there.

A British diplomat is even quoted as saying official malfeasance is a bigger foe than poverty or the Taliban. Opium profits and aid dough are enriching our Kabul government pals and funding friendly warlords amassing arms for the power struggle to follow the inevitable departure of foreign troops.

Meanwhile, Canada's navy --- quite selectively --- is interdicting drug runners in the region.

Yet none of this seems to intrude, even as we offer up more Calgarians and Canadians.

Are you into hearing strong words? Just say Kyoto investigation to Premier Ed. That's when an allegiance to our bravest men and women shows through

SOURCETAG 0805090874
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 5
BYLINE: RICK BELL
COLUMN: Page Five
WORD COUNT: 559

Ed is not happy.

In fact, Premier Ed is not shy about telling us he is actually miffed with the United Nations right about now.

You see, this week we find out Canada is being investigated by the enforcement branch of the UN's Kyoto Protocol for allegedly failing to meet a deadline set up for reporting greenhouse gases and our country is threatened with suspension from carbon trading.

As you also know, at the same time as the news of the UN probe, Canadians are serving and being wounded and dying on the front line of the UN-sanctioned, NATO-led mission in Afghanistan and, on Tuesday, the Taliban ambushed a patrol and shot and killed Cpl. Michael Starker, a full-time Calgary paramedic and a reservist medic with 15 Field Ambulance.

When Ed is asked about the UN announcement, he abandons his usual restraint.

"They're maintaining peace, order and helping to rebuild Afghanistan during this critical period," he says of Canadian soldiers who have given their all in that faraway land, including, for some, their lives.

"That's why personally I have some issues with the United Nations when it comes to pressing our federal government. I haven't heard too many countries lining up following Canada's lead in our sacrifice in Afghanistan.

"Does it bother me a bit? Yes, it does. Because at the same time we're protecting the backs of the Americans in Iraq. We're in Afghanistan. And we just lost another soldier."

As for those stateside, Ed is also not amused by all the chatter south of the border about dirty oil.

He says if the U.S. of A. doesn't want our black gold, there are plenty of other buyers elsewhere "crying for energy."

"We will not only depend on the American market. We will expand markets and if that means building a pipeline to the coast and selling to another country we will. That's no warning, I'm just being frank. I'm just

Are you into hearing strong words? Just say Kyoto investigation to Premier Ed. That's when an allgiance to

saying we have options and we'll continue to pursue options."

While Ed is worked up, he takes a swipe at carbon trading, where those who go over their cap on emissions buy credits from those don't.

He says no way and no how is he spending Alberta money to buy credits from other countries and he sure isn't buying them from other provinces.

"I assure you I'll fight any inter-regional transfer of wealth," says the premier.

Yes, Ed, who often answers in very long sentences resembling the verbal equivalent of a snakes-and-ladders game, pops up with a one-liner or two.

When asked if he's comfortable trading with countries having poor human rights records, such as China, he responds: "Do you shop at Wal-Mart? Zellers? Check your lawn furniture and look where it's made."

But the questions return to oil and Ed's expectations environmentalists will continue to go after Alberta.

And sure enough, on Wednesday, Greenpeace sends a letter to Ed and asks for a meeting with him, a proposed chinwag to include Mike Hudema, one of three people hit with a trespassing ticket after a stunt at the premier's recent dinner speech in Edmonton.

Remember?

Two Greenpeace protesters dropped from a catwalk high above the floor where a crowd was listening to Ed.

The duo unfurled a banner.

It read: Stelmach, The Best Premier Oil Money Can Buy.

They were apparently unaware it was not long ago when some of those with oil money were calling Ed all kinds of names, comparing him to Venezuelan leftist leader Hugo Chavez and predicting the end of Alberta as we know it because the premier increased the province's take of royalties.

The escapade reminds this columnist of the time six years ago when Greenpeace types climbed on the roof of Ralph's house here in Calgary and started putting up solar panels until the cops showed up.

Almost everybody sympathized with Ralph, some in colourful lingo.

Greenpeace also followed Ed around during the election campaign.

On the big day, Ed's party won 72 out of 83 legislature seats. There weren't a whole lot of votes supporting stopping the oilsands altogether, as Greenpeace wants.

That's probably because halting the oilsands would throw the province into economic shock. I know, it's a small detail.

Now, Greenpeace says it wants to discuss the death of the 500 birds in the Syncrude tailings pond and the provincial government investigation Greenpeace already doesn't like.

Of course, they know Ed won't meet with them and they can now say the premier is a lapdog of an oilpatch that doesn't like him a whole lot.

Are you into hearing strong words? Just say Kyoto investigation to Premier Ed. That's when an alliance to

Sure enough, the premier's people say yesterday there will be no meeting. Greenpeace has already dropped in once. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Are you into hearing strong words? Just say Kyoto investigation to Premier Ed. That's when an alliance to

Flag protocol debate brewing

SOURCETAG: 0805090867
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 3
ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos 1. photo by Darren Makowichuk, Sun Media Flags outside Old City Hall were finally lowered yesterday in honour of slain Calgary soldier Cpl. Michael Starker. One alderman says a debate on flag-lowering protocol is long overdue. 2. photo of DAVE BRONCONNIER No comment
BYLINE: SHAWN LOGAN, SUN MEDIA
WORD COUNT: 346

Flags in front of Old City Hall have been lowered to half staff to honour fallen local soldier and paramedic Cpl. Michael Starker, just a day after Mayor Dave Bronconnier said protocol dictated they remain aloft until the body returns to Canadian soil.

While the mayor yesterday refused to comment when asked about the apparent reversal, saying an interview request should be placed through his office, the confusion over the proper protocol has at least one alderman ready to bring the issue to council to decide on a policy once and for all.

Ald. Ric McIver said local soldiers who lose their lives while serving their country, such as Starker who was killed in Afghanistan this week, should be honoured in a consistent fashion and he plans to consult his council colleagues to make sure a policy is in place.

"I think once there is an appropriate period of time that's respectful for the family, I don't think it would be inappropriate to review the policy and see just what it is," he said.

"My sense is everybody's trying to do the right thing here, but in the long run it would be helpful to have a common understanding around the policy."

On Wednesday, Bronconnier said the city's official protocol was to only lower flags at the soldier's place of work and military facilities, while lowering them at other municipal buildings when the body is returned to Canada, and keep them at half staff until after the funeral.

He said that has always been the protocol followed by the city.

But last September, Bronconnier lowered flags at City Hall upon learning of the death of Cpl. Nathan Hornburg, calling it "a new protocol for City Hall, in keeping with the practice of Department of National Defence."

Ald. Gord Lowe said while symbolic gestures aren't without meaning, Calgary does far more for soldiers who are employed by the city, being the first municipality in Canada to agree to pay benefits and hold jobs for reservists that have to leave their job to fight or train.

"The point is we're staying within protocol and we have shown real support for our employees who are members of the reserves," he said.

"Calgary is a leader in supporting troops and while lowered flags are great and they show respect, for me I think it's more important to do those tangible things." KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Sombre tribute planned Fallen soldier repatriated today

SOURCETAG 0805090866
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 3
BYLINE: DOUG MCINTYRE, SUN MEDIA
WORD COUNT: 221

Ambulances will line the Highway of Heroes today as grieving family members of a Calgary reservist killed in Afghanistan watch their fallen loved one returned to Canadian soil.

The repatriation ceremony, noon Calgary time at CFB Trenton, Ont., comes three days after full-time paramedic Cpl. Michael Starker, 36, was slain by Taliban insurgents while on patrol east of Kandahar.

Starker will be the second Afghanistan casualty from Calgary to travel the Highway of Heroes since the stretch of Hwy. 401 from Trenton to Toronto was renamed by the Ontario government.

The sombre procession will provide a poignant salute to Starker's career as a paramedic, with EMS personnel from eastern Ontario standing on guard at overpasses along the full length of the 170-km route.

"They're going all out to show support -- it makes you proud to be a Canadian," said Capt. Nicole Meszaros, public affairs officer with 8 Wing/CFB Trenton.

Such a stirring tribute strongly resonates with Calgary EMS Chief Tom Sampson, who flew to Toronto yesterday.

"I'm overwhelmed by the level of support by the EMS right across Canada," he said.

Defence Minister Peter MacKay will be on the tarmac today to pay respects to Starker, a medic with the Calgary detachment of 15 Field Ambulance Regiment and a former Canadian Airborne paratrooper.

EMS is working with the military and Starker's family to prepare a public funeral in Calgary, said Sampson.

In the meantime, a memorial and book of condolences has been set up in the atrium of city hall.

Starker is the fourth Calgarian and 83rd Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan.

Twenty-four-year-old Cpl. Nathan Hornburg of Calgary became the first Canadian casualty of the Afghanistan mission to officially travel the Highway of Heroes last September. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Afghan official pays homage

SOURCETAG 0805090865
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 2
BYLINE: BILL KAUFMANN, SUN MEDIA
WORD COUNT: 131

Despite the presence of corruption and extremists in the Afghan government, Kabul's ambassador to Ottawa said Canada's sacrifices in his country aren't in vain.

Visiting Calgary, Omar Samad also said it's impossible to say when Afghan security forces would no longer require foreign contingents such as Canada's.

"I wish I could tell you," Samad told the Sun yesterday.

And he admitted "Taliban-like" politicians sit in the country's parliament, and some have pushed extremist policies while others have been linked to corruption.

"There's a certain amount of corruption that should be expected in a post-conflict situation," said Samad.

But he said that shouldn't deter Canadians in their mission there, one that's already bearing fruit.

"Canada should continue to play a strong role in Afghanistan," he said.

"We need to work in a more cohesive manner and strengthen military and civilian co-operation."

Samad also met with some of Cpl. Michael Starker's colleagues yesterday to offer his respects after the medic was killed in battle against the Taliban on Tuesday.

"He most certainly represents the best that Canada offers," said Samad, adding Starker's role as a medic is one highly-prized by Afghans. **KEYWORDS=ALBERTA**

Comrade witnessed devastating battle Fellow medic saw fatal firefight

SOURCETAG: 0805090864

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2008.05.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 2

ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos 1. photo by Murray Brewster, CP Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, 40, witnessed the ambush that killed Canadian medic Cpl. Michael Starker on Tuesday. Lacentra is also a medic and ambulance technician in Calgary. 2. photo of MICHAEL STARKER Killed by Taliban

BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR

WORD COUNT: 321

The ambush that took the life of Cpl. Michael Starker unfolded within sight of a heavily defended Canadian forward operating base, much to the horror and dismay of his fellow soldiers and a long-time friend.

Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, 40, had known Starker for 10 years, serving with him both in the reserves and as emergency medical technicians in Calgary.

Lacentra, who served as a peacekeeper in 1992 in the Balkans, is by no means naive about the risks of combat.

The sharp crackle of the fierce exchange was the first indication to troops at Masum Ghar, about 35 km west of Kandahar, that something was up.

"We could see it from where we were; we could see the firefight going on," said Lacentra, a medic with the 15th Field Ambulance evacuation platoon.

He was standing in the command post when the base commander ran out and mounted one of the bastion's walls to get a view of what was going on.

"You could see his concern," Lacentra recalled in an interview yesterday.

The radio began to chatter.

There were wounded.

How bad?

When the answer came back, Lacentra turned to the soldiers beside him.

"I said: 'You know a gunshot wound is never a good thing.' "

His training as an ambulance technician had kicked in.

"We knew it was Canadians and I guess I was, without even consciously doing it, was trying to prepare these guys. I just said that kind of gunshot wound doesn't end up with a good result."

At the time, Lacentra didn't know it was his friend, the guy with whom he had worked out at the gym every day during training in Edmonton, the guy whom he clearly looked up to as a paramedic, a soldier and a person of "amazing character and strength."

Starker, 36, was evacuated by helicopter to the NATO military hospital at Kandahar Airfield along with a second unidentified soldier, who was wounded.

Doctors pronounced Starker dead at the Role 3 treatment centre.

The ambush on Tuesday, the first shooting death of a Canadian soldier in direct combat with the enemy in almost 20 months, is still under investigation by military police.

It was very quiet that evening in the vehicle when Lacentra drove with other troops back to the airfield, where the majority of Canada's 2,500 troops in Afghanistan are stationed.

Once in a while, the cheerful Italian-immigrant to Canada, who possesses an easy smile, likes to sing in the car.

"So when we got just close to KAF actually one of the guys said: 'Hey Fabio why don't you sing us a song.' "

He did, but his heart was only in it for a few minutes.

His mind was on Starker.

"I kind of knew it was him, but I hoped it was somebody else. Right? That's not a good thing to say," he added with tears beginning in the corners of his eyes. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Fatal ambush in Afghanistan ends 10-year friendship; Death sparks soul-searching, but medics accept the risks

IDNUMBER 200805090033
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A2
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Ryan Cormier, The Journal / Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra speaks at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan Thursday about the death of his close friend and fellow medic, Cpl. Michael Starker. ;
KEYWORDS: !@DATELINE=KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Ryan Cormier
SOURCE: The Edmonton Journal
WORD COUNT: 310

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – As he watched the aftermath of a Taliban ambush from more than a kilometre away, Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra felt that his friend Cpl. Michael Starker was in the midst of something horrible.

"I knew it was a patrol, I knew what component it was coming from and I knew Mike was part of that component," Lacentra said. "When I was watching it, I had an inkling."

When he returned to Kandahar Airfield, Lacentra learned a decade-long friendship had come to a violent end. Starker, 36, was fatally shot during the ambush on Tuesday morning near a Canadian forward operating base in the Zhari district.

Both reservist medics from Calgary with 15 Field Ambulance, the two men worked together in Canada and Afghanistan and knew each other well.

Wednesday night, Lacentra was one of the soldiers who carried Starker's flag-covered coffin into a waiting aircraft to begin the journey home.

The pair had discussed the dangers they would face while training together daily at the Edmonton Garrison before their tour of Afghanistan.

"I questioned him on it," the 40-year-old Lacentra said. "When things were frustrating or trying, I'd say, 'What are you doing here? You're a paramedic. Go back and enjoy your life in Calgary.'"

But the idea of leaving wouldn't appeal to a reservist who volunteered to help the injured in a conflict that had claimed the lives of 82 soldiers and a diplomat before his own.

Starker was previously a sniper and commando with the Canadian Airborne Regiment. He had been on previous tours, although this was his first in Afghanistan. Starker had much to be proud of, but would have been the last to say it.

"He didn't boast about it," Lacentra said. "Very few people knew of his background, his exceptional skills as a soldier."

Lacentra said he and other medics have discussed Starker's death in the past two days as a way to help get each other through it.

They were aware of the risks of the mission and the death of their fellow medic hasn't made any of them reconsider their place in Afghanistan.

It is a risk they accept, Lacentra said.

rcormier@thejournal.canwest.com

Friend recalls inkling of fatal ambush

IDNUMBER 200805090123
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: D10
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD
BYLINE: Ryan Cormier
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 286

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD – As he watched the aftermath of a Taliban ambush from more than a kilometre away, Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra felt that his friend Cpl. Michael Starker was in the midst of something horrible.

"I knew it was a patrol, I knew what component it was coming from and I knew Mike was part of that component," Lacentra said. "When I was watching it, I had an inkling."

He then heard there had been a casualty during the ambush roughly 30 kilometres west of Kandahar City. As every soldier does with such grim news, he wondered if it was someone close.

This time, it was.

When he returned to the Kandahar Airfield, Lacentra learned a decade-long friendship had come to a violent end. Starker, 36, was fatally shot during the ambush on Tuesday morning near a Canadian forward operating base in the Zhari district.

Both from Calgary and both reservist medics with 15 Field Ambulance, the two men worked together in Canada and Afghanistan and knew each other well.

Wednesday night, Lacentra was one of the soldiers who carried Starker's flag-covered coffin into a waiting aircraft to begin the journey home.

While they trained together daily at the Edmonton Garrison before their tour of Afghanistan, the pair discussed the dangers they would face.

"We actually talked a lot about it," the 40-year-old Lacentra said.

"I questioned him on it. When things were frustrating or trying, I'd say 'what are you doing here? You're a paramedic. Go back and enjoy your life in Calgary.'"

Starker didn't.

The idea of it wouldn't appeal to a reservist who volunteered to help the injured in a conflict that had claimed the lives of 82 soldiers and a diplomat before his own.

Starker was previously a sniper and commando with the Canadian Airborne Regiment. He had been on previous tours, although this was his first in Afghanistan. Starker had much to be proud of, but would have been the last to say it.

Front page needed

IDNUMBER 200805090035
PUBLICATION: The Province
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: A23
KEYWORDS: 0
BYLINE: Michele Coleman
SOURCE: The Province
WORD COUNT: 50

The placement of the story of Cpl. Michael Starker's death in Afghanistan (May 7) was not becoming of this soldier's contribution and sacrifice.

These stories deserve the front page to remind all of us that our Canadian military are working 24/7 to ensure individual freedoms and dignity.

Michele Coleman,

Abbotsford

Is making the supreme sacrifice no longer news?

IDNUMBER 200805090175
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: National
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A17
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: / (See hardcopy for Photo Description);
BYLINE: Steve Smedley
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 93

Re: Canadian Soldier 83rd To Die In Afghan Mission, May 7.

I am very disappointed to see that the Post placed the story of the death of Corporal Michael Starker (seen right) near the back of the front section in Wednesday's edition. Has it come to this already? Sadly, a story about a bunch of junkies receiving their fix at a government-approved facility in Vancouver is front page news, while a story about one of our boys making the supreme sacrifice is relegated to the back pages.

Shame on you, National Post.

Steve Smedley, Regina.

KEYWORDS: 0

Decade-long friendship ends violently in Afghanistan; 'He was very proud of being a paramedic'

IDNUMBER 200805090134
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2008.05.09
EDITION: National
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A8
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Ryan Cormier, Canwest News Service /Master Corporal Fabio Lacentra, a friend of Corporal Michael Starker, at the Kandahar Airfield yesterday. ;
BYLINE: Ryan Cormier
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 429

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN – As he watched the aftermath of a Taliban ambush from more than a kilometre away, Master Corporal Fabio Lacentra felt that his friend Corporal Michael Starker was in the midst of something horrible.

"I knew it was a patrol, I knew what component it was coming from and I knew Mike was part of that component," Master Corporal Lacentra said. "When I was watching it, I had an inkling."

He then heard there had been a casualty during the ambush roughly 30 kilometres west of Kandahar City. As every soldier does with such grim news, he wondered if it was someone close.

This time, it was.

When he returned to the Kandahar Airfield, Master Cpl. Lacentra learned a decade-long friendship had come to a violent end. Cpl. Starker, 36, was fatally shot during the ambush on Tuesday morning near a Canadian forward operating base in the Zhari district.

Both from Calgary and both reservist medics with 15 Field Ambulance, the two men worked together in Canada and Afghanistan and knew each other well.

On Wednesday night, Master Cpl. Lacentra was one of the soldiers who carried Cpl. Starker's flag-covered coffin into a waiting aircraft to begin the journey home.

While they trained together daily at the Edmonton Garrison before their tour of Afghanistan, the pair discussed the dangers they would face.

"We actually talked a lot about it," Master Cpl. Lacentra, 40, said. "I questioned him on it. When things were frustrating or trying, I'd say, 'What are you doing here? You're a paramedic. Go back and enjoy your life in Calgary.'"

Cpl. Starker did not. The idea of it would not appeal to a reservist who volunteered to help the injured in a conflict that had claimed the lives of 82 soldiers and a diplomat before his own.

Cpl. Starker was previously a sniper and commando with the Canadian Airborne Regiment. He had been on previous tours, although this was his first in Afghanistan. Cpl. Starker had much to be proud of, but would have been the last to say it.

"He was very proud of what he had done, but he didn't boast about it," Master Cpl. Lacentra said. "Very few people knew of his background, his exceptional skills as a soldier. At this point in his life, he was very proud of being a paramedic, but he didn't rub peoples faces in it."

An unidentified soldier was injured in the attack that killed Cpl. Starker, but he is now in stable condition.

Master Cpl. Lacentra said he and other medics have discussed Cpl. Starker's death in the past two days as a way to help get each other through it. They were aware of the risks of the mission and the death of their fellow medic has not made any of them reconsider their place in Afghanistan.

It is a risk they accept, Master Cpl. Lacentra said.

KEYWORDS: COURT MARTIAL; CANADIANS

Alderman urges council to review flag protocol

IDNUMBER 200805090096

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2008.05.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: City & Region

PAGE: B5

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Grant Black, Calgary Herald / The Canadian flag in front of Old City Hall was lowered to half-mast on Thursday to honour Cpl. Michael Starker, who died Tuesday in Afghanistan. ;

KEYWORDS: FLAGS & EMBLEMS

BYLINE: Kim Guttormson, with files from Colette Derworiz, CalgaryHerald.

SOURCE: Calgary Herald

WORD COUNT: 401

An alderman wants to re-examine when the city lowers its flags to mark the death of a local soldier, following confusion about the practice this week.

Cpl. Michael Starker, a Calgary paramedic, was killed Tuesday while on patrol in Afghanistan.

The city was to fly the flags in front of Old City Hall at half-staff today, when Starker's body arrives back in Canada, but they were also lowered Thursday. They will stay at half-mast until sunset the day of his funeral.

Flags at EMS headquarters were lowered the day of Starker's death, and the flags at all City of Calgary facilities will be lowered the day of his funeral. The city also has a condolence book in the City Hall atrium.

There appears to be no written policy about when city flags are lowered in the case of a soldier's death.

Starker is the fourth Calgarian to be killed in the war in Afghanistan.

Ald. Andre Chabot wants a policy in writing and he believes the flags should be lowered when the news breaks.

"I think they should have been lowered immediately," he said, adding he wondered why the EMS flags were down but not those at City Hall.

Mayor Dave Bronconnier said the question of when the flags were lowered this week detracts from the more important issue.

"I don't believe in distractions in what should truly be a focus on a fallen Canadian soldier, a City of Calgary employee, a husband, a son, a brother, who has lost his life," he said Thursday. "I'm not going to allow a controversy . . . to overshadow what this community is going through, which is the loss of a young Canadian.

"Our focus is and will remain on assisting the family and the employees at the City of Calgary who are grieving."

At its meeting Monday, council will have a moment of silence for Starker.

Others agreed the city's flag protocol isn't an issue.

"Like our military leave policy for our city reservists, our flag policy is honourable, exemplary and respectful. I have no further comment at this difficult time," said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who sits on the Canadian Forces liaison council.

Colleen Rowe, executive director of the Calgary Military Family Resource Centre, said the timing of lowering the flags at City Hall has never been raised as an issue for local military families.

There is no standard policy for municipal buildings across Canada. Some, like Edmonton, home of 3 Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, lower flags the day of the funeral.

The federal government has also been criticized for not lowering the Peace Tower flag to half-mast when a Canadian soldier is killed overseas.

One former military man walking through City Hall on Thursday said he believes the flags should be lowered right away, "especially for a city employee, like (Starker) was."

But Gareth Williams said the timing doesn't matter as much as the act itself.

"Lowering the flag is an additional statement that (the death) doesn't go unrecognized," he said.

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5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

IDNUMBER 200805090077

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2008.05.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A28

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Jenna Bush; Colour Photo: Kathleen Mahoney ; Colour Photo: Michaelle Jean ; Colour Photo: Stefan Wermuth, Reuters / Picture of the Day: Hot-air balloons light up the night sky at an event in front of the federal palace in Bern, Switzerland. ; Colour Photo: Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo ; Colour Photo: Colin Campbell ; Colour Photo: Deepak Chopra ; Photo: (See hard copy for description). ;

KEYWORDS: 0

BYLINE: Compiled by Michael Lau

SOURCE: Calgary Herald

WORD COUNT: 896

Top Stories

Stelmach Battles U.S. 'dirty Oil' Campaign

The Stelmach government fended off Thursday the latest attack against Alberta's oilsands, warning the province will look to export energy overseas if an environmental coalition's campaign to U.S. congressmen to prohibit "dirty oil" proves successful.

Page A1

Bush Preoccupied by Daughter's Wedding

U.S. President George W. Bush has sprinkled references to his twin daughter Jenna's wedding into most public appearances for the past few months.

Page A2

Paramedics to Salute Fallen Reservist

Paramedics and ambulances will line the five-kilometre stretch of road between CFB Trenton and the 401 highway — as well as manning every overpass along the 170 kilometres to Toronto — in honour of fallen reservist Cpl. Michael Starker as his body makes the final passage home.

Page A3

News Sections — A and B

City & Region

U of C Prof Scoops \$225,000 Trudeau Award

A U of C professor has received a prestigious \$225,000 award. Human rights lawyer Kathleen Mahoney was one of five Canadians awarded a Trudeau Foundation Fellowship Prize for 2008.

Page B2

School Support Workers Back Strike Action

Support workers in the city's public schools — from office staff and lunchroom supervisors to special aides and psychologists — have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action.

Page B2

Canada

Minister's Critics Called Busybodies by Tories

Dismissing the opposition as "busybodies," the Conservative government said the fact that Canada's foreign minister recently dated a woman once linked to Quebec biker gangs is a private matter that is "none of your business."

Page A4

World

Aid for Cyclone Victims Face Military Hurdles

With up to 100,000 dead and one million homeless, aid is slowly making its way to the victims of cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, but the country's military regime continues to stall many foreign efforts.

Page A5

Sarkozy Recalls Canadian War Heroes

French President Nicolas Sarkozy drew Thursday on the memories of thousands of Canadian war heroes during a cemetery visit to re-define how his country views Canada's national unity debate. Sarkozy was speaking in the midst of a federalist-separatist furor in Canada over the warm French reception given to Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean.

Page A8

Obama Predicts Victory Within Weeks

Barack Obama predicted Thursday he could wrap up the Democratic presidential nomination within two weeks.

Page A17

Traffic

– Road closure: On 5th Avenue between Centre Street and 1st Street S.E. Starting 6 p.m. today until Monday, at about 5 a.m.

– Lane closure: On eastbound 64th Avenue east of Centre Street N.E. Right lane closed starting 9 a.m., today until Saturday, at about 12 p.m.

– Lane closure: On westbound McKnight Boulevard between Greenview Drive and Centre Street N.E. Right lane closed starting 9 a.m. today until about 3 p.m.

Commuter Weather

6 A.M. Off to Work: Variably cloudy.

Temperature: 0 C

12 Noon Lunch: Sunny.

Temperature: 6 C

5 P.M. Heading Home: Clear.

Temperature: 7 C

Overnight: Clear. Low: –3 C

Saturday: Variably cloudy. High: 11 C Low: 1 C

Thursday: High: 7.7 C Low: 1.2 C

Online Features

CalgaryHerald.com

News: Age differences can cause friction in the workplace.

News: Family pleads for government's help in returning man to Canada.

News: Ottawa did not violate man's rights by ordering extradition to U.S., court says.

Quote of the Day

"Facebook and MySpace are showing how to aim higher and keep kids safer"

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, announcing that Facebook has agreed to get tougher on keeping its young website users safe from bullies, porn, pedophiles and other online hazards.

Calgary Business -- D1

Markets

– TSX Composite 236.46 14607.99

– Dow Jones 52.43 12866.78

– Nasdaq 12.75 2451.24

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

– TSX Venture 34.87 2539.45

Housing Starts Plummet 56 Per Cent

Calgary area housing starts for single-detached homes in April plunged by more than 56 per cent compared with a year ago.

Through a third of the year in 2008, single-detached starts in the Calgary Census Metropolitan Area have not been this low since 1996.

Page D1

Nokia Expects to Sell 35 Million GPS Phones

Nokia Oyj, the world's top cellphone maker, expects to sell 35 million Global Positioning System (GPS) equipped phones this year, chief executive Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo said Thursday.

Page D2

Editorial — A26

China Threatens World Health

If politics shouldn't interfere with amateur sport, that reasoning doubly applies to health. But the Chinese government is once again engaging in politics to keep Taiwan away from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Page A26

Letter of the Day

"Dog owners are citizens, pay taxes and licence fees and are entitled to use a fair share of Calgary's green spaces."

Linda Scarlett, Page A27

Sports — E1

Bettman Denies Pushing VP to Leafs

There has been plenty of speculation recently that NHL vice-president Colin Campbell is being promoted by commissioner Gary Bettman as the right man for the general manager's job with the Toronto Maple Leafs. Bettman, however, denied the speculation Thursday.

Page E2

Stamps Fullback Retires From Football

After one year of professional football, Calgary Stampeders fullback Gerald Commissiong has hung up his cleats. The Stamps announced Thursday that Commissiong has retired from football to pursue professional opportunities off the gridiron.

Page E4

Real Life --- C12

Chopra Graces Jube

Philosopher–doctor Deepak Chopra will be in Calgary for a talk May 19 at the Jubilee Auditorium.

Page C12

Mom's Education Affects Men's Choice for Wife

If a man's mother is highly educated, chances are the woman he marries will have a similar education, according to a new study. Researchers at the University of Iowa found that nearly 80 per cent of high-achieving men who were sons of mothers with college degrees married women with a similar education.

Page C12

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 --- C1

Spielberg Directing Talent Towards Video Games

With the return of Indiana Jones due in theatres in two weeks, you'd expect producer Steven Spielberg to be all about movies right now. But here he is, enthusiastically chatting up video games.

Page C1

Tonight's TV Picks:

- What Not to Wear: 7 p.m. on TLC (Ch. 24).
- Movie: Robots: 8 p.m. on Global (Ch. 7).

It's An Odd World

Racing Dog Rekindles Glory Days

At a March British soccer match between Blackpool and Burnley teams, greyhound owner Jane Holland was escorting her retired dog Fool's Mile for a presentation when the crowd noise evidently energized the champion racer, who broke away.

"(W)hen she heard the crowd, she was off," said Holland, and Fool's Mile circled the track four times before being restrained. The dog appeared to be reliving her glory days.

Huge tribute planned for Calgary soldier; Ambulances to line route as fallen hero returns to Canada

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Grant Black, Calgary Herald / Tracy Larson signs thebook of condolences Thursday at Calgary City Hall for Cpl. Michael Starker, who was killed while on patrol in Afghanistan on Tuesday. ; Photo: Ryan Cormier, Edmonton Journal / Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra says he may have heard the volley of gunfire that killed his longtime friend, Cpl. Michael Starker. ; Photo: Cpl. Michael Starker ;

KEYWORDS: PARAMEDICS; AMBULANCE SERVICES; EMERGENCY SERVICES

BYLINE: Gwendolyn Richards

SOURCE: Calgary Herald; with files from Canwest News Service

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Paramedics and ambulances will line the five-kilometre stretch of road between CFB Trenton and Highway 401 — as well as manning every overpass along the 170 kilometres to Toronto — in honour of fallen reservist Cpl. Michael Starker as his body makes the final passage home.

Starker, 36, was killed in Afghanistan on Tuesday while on patrol in the Pashmul region of the Zhari district after his group was ambushed.

The Calgary paramedic and member of 15 Field Ambulance is expected to arrive back on Canadian soil at 2 p.m. today — one of the last steps in a journey that began Wednesday at the airfield in Kandahar.

Master Cpl. Fabio Lacentra, a friend of Starker's for more than 10 years, was among the soldiers who carried the flag-covered coffin to the waiting aircraft in Kandahar.

The pair, both members of 15 Field Ambulance, had trained at the Edmonton Garrison before deployment, where Lacentra would talk to Starker about the dangers they would both face in Afghanistan.

"I questioned him on it. When things were frustrating or trying, I'd say, 'What are you doing here? You're a paramedic. Go back and enjoy your life in Calgary,' " he said.

But Starker, a former sniper and commando with the Canadian Airborne Regiment, remained committed to serving in Afghanistan.

Lacentra was at a Canadian operating base near the ambush and heard the volley of gunfire that may have killed Starker.

He feared for his friend.

"I knew it was a patrol. I knew what component it was coming from and I knew Mike was part of that component," he said. "When I was watching it, I had an inkling."

Fellow Calgary paramedic and 15 Field Ambulance member Cpl. Travis Lanoway has been accompanying Starker on his final journey to Canada.

On the ground, the plane will be met by a 12-member guard of honour and a commander, who will stand along the leading edge of the plane's right wing and offer a rifle salute as the casket is lowered, said Capt. Nicole Meszaros, public affairs officer for CFB Trenton.

Eight pallbearers will then carry the casket across the tarmac to a waiting hearse, where the family will get its first chance to be close to the coffin.

"That's the point where it really gets real (for family members)," Meszaros said.

The hearse will then begin the long drive to Toronto.

Meszaros said she has been told ambulances and paramedics will line the five- or six-kilometre length of road between the base and the highway in honour of Starker.

Ambulances and paramedics will also stand at each overpass, she said.

A public funeral is being planned for Starker in Calgary, but details have yet to be confirmed, said public affairs officer Capt. Peter Fuerbringer.

grichards@theherald.canwest.com

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Readers Honour Cpl. Michael Starker

Submissions from condolences page on calgaryherald.com:

"Mike, the world is a smaller place without you, but your life's work is reflected in the hearts of all those who have loved you, and have been honoured to know you. Thank you for being the kind of person many of us could only strive to be."

Carina and Joel Moran,

Red Deer

"This country and world is a better place for who you are Mike and what you have accomplished in the time you spent with us. You will forever remain in our hearts and therefore will never be forgotten."

Erin Reid,

Calgary/Nakoda EMS

"Very few people have the courage to risk their lives for what they believe in, Michael Starker was one of those special individuals who walked the walk. Thank you for doing the right thing when it wasn't easy, and standing up for those who are unable."

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Alan Runnells,

Calgary

"Thank you to your husband for serving his country, and trying to make this world a better place for me and my kids to live!"

Sharon Guarasci,

Windsor, Ont.

"Calgary EMS was incredibly fortunate that you chose us from all of the places you could be. You also chose to continue serving your country; we are all fortunate to have dedicated people like yourself. Calgary EMS is proud to say that you are one of us; our hearts and thoughts are with you and your family."

Mike Plato,

Calgary EMS

"His sacrifice will never be forgotten by the people he fought bravely for and he will never leave the hearts of the family and friends that meant the most to him. . . . I am honoured to have met such a great man.

Candice Ziolkowski,

Dartmouth, N.S.

"Serving with Mike on more than one occasion including the present has been an honour for me. All of the admiration from all who knew him speaks volumes about the man he is. He is truly one of a kind and he will be missed but never forgotten.

Warrant Officer Steve Merry,

Edmonton

"You were truly a proud Canadian, serving others and trying to make this a better world in which to live. Your love of life, for family, friends and those around you are a tribute to the son, husband and man you were."

Elizabeth Anne Yundt,

Sherwood Park

Public funeral to honour soldier

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A public funeral is being planned in Calgary for Cpl. Mike Starker, who was killed in a Taliban ambush Tuesday while on foot patrol in Afghanistan. The body of the former Calgary paramedic will be returned to Canada today.

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Send Your Condolences

Share your thoughts for Cpl. Michael Starker online.

Go to calgaryherald.com