

CONFERENCE OF DEFENCE ASSOCIATIONS
LA CONFÉRENCE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE LA DÉFENSE

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27 November 2007

The Honourable John Manley, PC
Chairman
Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan
55 Metcalfe Street, 15th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L5

Dear Mr. Manley,

The Conference of Defence Associations (CDA), founded some 75 years ago, is the oldest and most influential advocacy group in Canada's defence community, representing thirty one associations from across the country. It is a non-partisan, independent and non-profit organization. The CDA restricts its aims to one specific area – security and defence issues – and expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy.

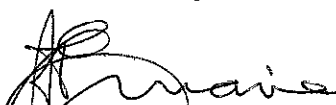
The CDA's objectives are to:

- Consider the problems of national security;
- Assist the Government of Canada in placing these problems before Canadians;
- Co-ordinate the activities of member associations in matters of common interest affecting all Branches and Services of the Canadian Forces;
- Make recommendations to the Government of Canada through the Minister of National Defence, various Parliamentary Committees and other appropriate channels; and
- Promote the efficiency and well being of the Canadian Forces.

In line with our mandate, please find enclosed the submission of the CDA to the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan. Our view is that Canada must remain engaged in Afghanistan and in Kandahar for as long as it takes for us and our ISAF allies to complete the mission that we have undertaken.

Our submission focuses on the strategic centrality of Kandahar Province and City, the development of the Afghan National Army, and progress in terms of the international community's Afghanistan Compact. We also provide concrete criteria for assessing the success of the ISAF mission, something that we hope will be critical in formulating your final report. We do not propose to offer specific recommendations as to the composition of the Canadian military contribution to ISAF, believing that task to be the responsibility of the Chief of the Defence Staff and his senior staff, in whom we have full confidence.

Yours sincerely,


Richard J. Evraire, CMM, CD
Lieutenant-General (Retired)
Chairman



**Submission of the
Conference of Defence Associations
to the
Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan
November 28, 2007**

INTRODUCTION

The opportunities that members of the Conference of Defence Associations (CDA) have had, over recent years, to speak with members of the Canadian Forces at all levels from Private Soldier to four star General, and the visit to Afghanistan in late October and early November, 2006 by members of the Executive of the CDA, have provided us with a privileged, although not unique, perspective on the war in Afghanistan that we wish to share with you.

That perspective allows us to state without reservation that the Canadian troops, both male and female, regular and reserve, serving in Afghanistan believe in their mission; believe they are making a difference; believe that progress is being achieved; believe in their leaders; believe in the quality of their equipment; and believe they have been well prepared for their mission. They, along with many Canadians, understand that:

- The CF, along with DFAIT, CIDA, the RCMP and others are involved in the reconstruction of a formerly failed state which has slowly advanced to the status of a "fragile" state;
- There is no "quick fix" for the reconstruction of a fragile state;
- The Canadian PRT in Kandahar and the critical assistance provided by the Strategic Assistance Team (SAT) in Kabul are part of a tangible Canadian contribution, as is the training of the Afghanistan National Army and the Afghanistan National Police;
- The situation is much better than it was six years ago under the Taliban and better than it was a year and a half ago when the Canadian Battle Group arrived in Kandahar;
- We and ISAF are in Afghanistan not as invaders but at the request of the elected Government of Afghanistan and under a UN Mandate;
- The people of Afghanistan are weary of war, of destitution, and of hopelessness;
- The majority of the Afghan people want us there (recent BBC and Asia Foundation polls indicate that 80% of the citizens support the presence of the coalition soldiers in Afghanistan), and want the economic and social development that is occurring in many of the regions to spread to all parts of the country;
- The people of Afghanistan fear what would happen to them if our search for an early "Exit Strategy" places its emphasis upon "Exit"



rather than upon "Strategy" and leads to the callous abandonment of a "fragile but growing state" which is still too weak to stand up to its oppressors;

- The people of Afghanistan especially fear the return of the Taliban and their partners in crime, drugs, and terrorism;
- The people of Afghanistan believe, as does the CDA, that Canada must remain engaged with the ISAF and in Kandahar Province until it can be determined that the ISAF mission and Canada's considerable part in it is effective and successful;
- If we withdraw before the mission is considered to have been effective and successful, all that has been achieved will be put at risk.

THE STRATEGIC CENTRALITY OF KANDAHAR CITY AND KANDAHAR PROVINCE

In the military, "Vital Ground" is ground of such tactical or strategic importance that its gain or loss can influence the outcome of a battle or a campaign.

The City of Kandahar is located at a crossroads that dominates south western and western Afghanistan. On the main corridor which stretches south east through Spin Boldak and across the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, it lies on what is a perfect example of strategic "Vital Ground". In times of peace, the corridor serves as a critical economic transportation route to Quetta where rail access to Karachi and to sea transportation can be gained. In the current conflict, the corridor acts as a

critical supply route for the anti-government forces' training and logistics bases in and around Quetta. Whoever holds Kandahar controls this critical corridor.

Kandahar also lies across the main east/west transportation corridor from Kabul to Herat on the Afghanistan/Iran border. Whoever holds Kandahar is in a powerful position to influence events in and control Helmand Province (where the United Kingdom forces have been in constant battle with the Taliban), and also controls access to Uruzgan Province to the north (where the Dutch and Australian forces are operating). Finally, whoever holds Helmand Province also controls access to Herat and to Iran.

The Taliban know this just as well as we do, given that their initial campaign plan, which led to their victory and the establishment of their regime in 1994/6, called for moving up the Quetta/Kandahar corridor, encircling and capturing Kandahar, and advancing up the long broad valley to Kabul.

The capturing of Kandahar, an event of great psychological importance to the Taliban (many of their leadership come from the area and the capture of the city was the first great victory in their earlier campaign), would serve as a highly significant omen of success in their campaign.

Not surprisingly, then, in 2006, their campaign plan for the recapture of Afghanistan and the overthrow of the legitimate, democratically elected government of Afghanistan was based upon their previous campaign plan. Much to their dismay, however, they faced the newly arrived Canadians and, in a series of set-piece battles in and around Kandahar City, they also met defeat.

In 2007 their campaign plan



abandoned the concept of set-piece conventional battles against the Canadians and turned to the use of the infamous Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), whose indiscriminate use has caused enormous suffering and loss of life in the civilian population of Kandahar but led to no greater military success.

The Taliban can claim some success, however. They have been able to undermine public support in Canada and in other ISAF countries, one result of which has been a proposal to withdraw Canadian forces from southern Afghanistan. This possibility poses a critical strategic dilemma for the ISAF, given that no one is currently prepared to replace the Canadians in Kandahar Province and, for the moment and for some time to come, the Afghanistan National Army does not possess the capacity to defend Kandahar by itself.

THE ISAF DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT FOR THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

Building an operationally effective army takes a very long time. The following is a brief explanation of the Canadian Development Strategy's sequential process aimed at creating an effective ANA, and an indication of the impediments to its creation.

- In the initial phases of the process, there is the acquisition of modern equipment suited to the battlefield; the development of experienced leaders at all levels, and the melding of disparate elements into a battalion-size unit capable of working as a collective entity. This first stage has necessitated the development of an ANA individual training system based upon a 16

week programme carried out at the Kabul Military Training Centre where the soldiers are put through six weeks of basic military training and seven weeks of training in their specific military trade (infantry, for example);

- Next comes a period of two weeks of 'collective training' during which the new soldiers are sent to their regional destination in 600-man battalions called 'Kandaks' where the light infantry battalions train and exercise with other combat arms and service support elements of armour, artillery, combat engineers, communicators, logistics and maintenance in order to learn the intricacies of "combined operations";
- The next step entails developing the ability of these battalions to conduct so-called 'joint' operations with close air support and helicopters (used for battlefield lift and logistics support). This is done through large-scale training exercises 'in the field'.

A number of Canadians have been assigned to the Kabul Training Centre in order to 'mentor' the training activities carried out by ANA leaders and trainers themselves. It is clear, therefore, that the focus of the Canadian Battle Group has shifted from one devoted only to the conduct of operations against the Taliban to one of mentoring the Afghan National Army's Kandaks and their leadership with a view to having the ANA conduct platoon-size stability operations within a Canadian company-group "under the command" of the Canadian Battle Group.

The combination of such



mentoring and the experience gained at the platoon level by the Afghan soldiers will result in the ANA Forces taking on larger activities at the Company group and battalion levels and to eventually 'taking the lead' in such operations.

As the Afghan National Army's capacity continues to grow, the mentoring focus will shift to the development of the communications, logistics, and maintenance elements of the 'Combined Arms Team'.

ASSESSING THE OPERATIONAL READINESS OF THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

The Canadian Army's assessment of the ANA, as of November 2007, is that considerable progress has been made. The ANA Brigade in Kandahar includes one battalion capable of 'leading operations' at the company-group light-infantry level, with the Canadians providing the firepower (artillery, main battle tanks, and linkage to close air) support, and some logistic, communications, and maintenance support.

A second Kandak battalion has deployed and has undergone the initial mentoring process designed to provide the field experience necessary to move from the individual training standard achieved in the Kabul Military Training Centre to one of actually conducting operations in battle.

The third Kandak battalion is about to enter the field operations mentoring process.

Clearly, the development of the ANA into a battle-capable operational force in Kandahar Province has been going well. Moreover, the addition of more "boots on the ground" in the form of this

developing ANA Brigade in Kandahar has allowed for an expansion of the security operations in the Province and a reduction in the space controlled by the Taliban.

We expect that the light infantry battalions and the logistics battalion of the ANA Brigade in Kandahar will be ready to conduct operations independently and under their own command by 2009.

We are less impressed with the equipment holdings of the ANA, a large proportion of which consists of obsolete Soviet-era stockpiles of disparate weapon systems and ammunitions—a potential logistics and maintenance nightmare.

We are therefore uneasy about the level of effectiveness of fire support in the Kandak brigade, and are extremely uneasy about the ability of the central government to re-supply the ANA forces in Kandahar and thereby sustain their operations.

The creation of an operationally capable and effective ANA does not depend only on the capabilities of the members of the ANA transmitted to them through a successful Canadian mentoring program. It also depends on the ability of the Afghan National Government to fund the recurring training, development and operational costs as well as the costs associated with the development and support of a coherent capital acquisition program.

THE AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL ARMY'S FUNDING DILEMMA

The security budget for Afghanistan is particularly difficult to understand. This stems, in part, from the fact that there are really two different security budgets, the one which flows



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through the Afghan government's Treasury channels (referred to as the "Core" budget), and the one which is paid directly to the security agencies by international donors (sometimes referred to as the "External Budget)."

The December, 2005 report of the World Bank, titled *Afghanistan: Managing Public Finances for Development—Vol. Five: Improving Public Financial Management in the Security Sector*, estimated that 92% of all public sector expenditures in Afghanistan in Fiscal Years 2003/4 and 2004/5 were funded by the international donor community.

The report further stated that 74% of these total public sector expenditures were made directly by international donors and their associated entities; only 18% were the result of donor contributions to the "Core Budget" controlled by the Afghanistan government's Treasury authorities; and slightly more (78%) of all Afghanistan security sector budgetary expenditures flowed through the "External Budget."

The World Bank also estimated that in Fiscal Years 2003/4 and 2004/5 the Afghan National Army accounted for about 60% of security sector spending: the Afghan National Police and Law Enforcement for 28%; Justice for 3%; Mine Action for 6%; and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programmes for 3%.

The World Bank further commented that "Whether in absolute terms (an estimated \$1.3 billion in 2004/05 not including most counter-narcotics expenditures) or as a share of GDP (23%), the size of the security sector is daunting."

To set this in greater context, we

turn to the International Monetary Fund Country Report 7/252 of July, 2007 where we find that the total "Core" budget expenditures in FY 2004/5 amounted to 13.9% of GDP, and that of this amount only 4.5% of GDP was generated by the Afghanistan government's own taxation and other revenue base.

Annual Afghanistan GDP growth rates have been impressive, matching the phenomenal 8-14% growth rates of the economy of The People's Republic of China on an annual percentage base.

Moreover, the Afghanistan government's revenues as a percentage of GDP have been rising equally quickly and are expected to hit 8.4% of GDP in FY 2009/10, and total government expenditures are expected to hit 21.% of GDP in the same year.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that total security sector expenditures at 23% of GDP in FY2004/5 are beyond the capacity of the Afghanistan "Core" budget to sustain, and wildly beyond the capacity of the Afghanistan government's own revenue base to sustain.

Set against this, according to the findings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's most recent report, the *Afghan Opium Survey* for 2007, is the size of the narco-economy which provides critical financial support to the Taliban forces,.

That report concludes that the value of the opium crop is now equal to more than half (53%) of the Afghanistan economy, and has an export value of over \$4 billion. "Approximately one quarter of this amount (\$1 billion) is earned by opium farmers. District officials take a percentage through a tax on crops (known as 'ushr'). Insurgents and warlords control the business of



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producing and distributing the drugs. The rest is made by drug traffickers.”

The ‘Correlation of Forces’ (to use that old but still useful Soviet term) in financial terms is foreboding, and leads us to the conclusion that if the Canadian Forces are withdrawn from Kandahar, and not replaced by other ISAF forces, the financial weakness of the Afghan National Government will not allow for support of the recurrent operational expenses of the ANA Brigade in Kandahar, let alone its expansion and re-equipping.

The result may well be the loss of the “Vital Ground” of Kandahar Province to the Taliban which could lead to the sequential loss of Uruzgan and Helmand Provinces, the ultimate failure of the Afghanistan Compact and victory for the Taliban.

THE AFGHANISTAN COMPACT

Canada has fully supported the “Benchmarks and Timelines” which both the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community established in *The Afghanistan Compact* in January of 2006. The Compact provides a highly detailed set of 43 benchmarks organized into the three broad pillars of:

- Security;
- Governance, the Rule of Law, and Human Rights; and
- Economic and Social Development.

In May, 2007 the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), in its first Annual Report on the Implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, reported that “This first annual report of the JCMB testifies to

both how much this partnership has achieved and how much remains to be done.” The Report noted that “Among long-term benchmarks:

- the gross enrolment in schools is estimated to have increased by 12% to 5.4 million students, 35% of whom are girls;
- 82% of Afghans now have access to the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS);
- a total of 6,121 Community Development Councils (CDCs) have been established in the past twelve months;
- 84% of the ring road network (2,818 km) is open with 59% (1,983 km) paved;
- the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) has cleared 132,080,792 sq. meters of land of mines since March 2006 (Hamal 1385);
- the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has conducted over 700 educational and public awareness events involving over 23,000 people, 7,000 of whom were women;
- a National Emergency Operations Center is functioning and a National Disaster Management Plan is being prepared; and
- domestic revenues were buoyant and exceeded the revenue target.”

ISAF MISSION EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA

Put a different way, the CDA believes that the ISAF mission and Canada’s considerable part in it will be considered to have been effective and successful if and when:



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- The campaign of terror being waged by the Taliban and their extremist allies fails;
- Security is restored to the point that ordinary Afghans enjoy personal liberty and freedom from fear;
- The Afghan Army and Police become effective in ensuring security;
- The Country's market economy begins to flourish;
- Central Afghan Government control spreads throughout the Country;
- Human rights are respected;
- A significant infrastructure development program is underway; and
- The elements of a 'made in Afghanistan' democratic system of government spreads to all parts of the country

It is obvious that achieving the foregoing is a phenomenally complex and difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, the CDA believes that the absence of any one of the above criteria would put the successful completion of the ISAF mission in doubt. We further believe in the importance of the ISAF mission being achieved with 'an Afghan face, at an Afghan pace'.

ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF THE ISAF OPERATION

Conventional wisdom suggests that there is "No Military Solution" in Afghanistan. A more accurate portrayal is that "Without the security the military provide, there can be no development".

Witness the fact that the deployment of ISAF has substantially expanded the area in which Afghanistan's citizens can feel secure; an area in which development, as noted in the JCMB report cited above, has occurred.

In its 2007 *Winter Survey* (the annual *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey*) consisting of structured interviews of headmen of 508 selected villages in 236 districts across all Provinces, the highly respected United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) provides a useful "grass roots" database of opinion at the village level.

Released on Mar 5, 2007, the *Survey* reports that the security situation in Afghanistan was rated by the "grass roots" as Very Good (12) or Good (11) in 23 Provinces; and as Very Bad (1) or Bad (7) in eight Provinces (all in the Southern region). In late 2006, then, 75% of Afghanistan's Provinces felt secure.

The challenge for ISAF is to extend that feeling of security to the eight southern Provinces.

The UNODC *Survey* asked about external assistance activities reaching the "grass roots." Making the point that with security comes development, the village headmen reported that 451 (89%) of the 508 villages surveyed were provided with external assistance in 828 activities as follows:

- 54% by the Government of Afghanistan;
- 24% by UN Agencies;
- 17% by NGOs;
- 4% by USAID; and
- 1% by other agencies.

Assistance was provided for the following activities:



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- medical (50.2%);
- infrastructure (20.4%);
- agricultural (13.5%);
- education (11.1%);
- employment (3.9%); and
- other (0.3%).

Turning from the “grass roots” micro perspective (provided by the UNODC) to a macro perspective, we can trace economic growth rates in GDP, investment, and exports over the past five years which are cited in the International Monetary Fund’s report released in July, 2007, as shown in the table below.

The IMF report states that “Despite a difficult security environment, Afghanistan’s performance during 2006/07 conformed broadly with the objectives of the program supported by the PRGF (Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility) arrangement. All the quantitative performance criteria and indicative targets through March 2007,

Year	GDP Growth Rate	Gross Domestic Investment % of GDP	Exports of Goods Growth Rate
2002/3	28.6%	28.3%	-
2003/4	15.7%	35.7%	36.1%
2004/5	8.0%	44.0%	21.6%
2005/6	14.0%	38.9%	22.2%
2006/7	7.5%	44.1%	15.7%
2007/8e	13.0%	39.8%	18.3%

and the structural benchmarks for the second review were observed, except for the benchmark related to the preparation of a divestment plan for state-owned enterprises and government agencies engaged in commercial activities.”

Finally, if we turn to the most recent (Sept 17-24, 2007) poll conducted in Afghanistan by the Canadian polling firm Environics and its partner, the Kabul based Afghan Centre for Social and Opinion Research, we find that in Kandahar:

- 57% of those polled said the local presence of foreign countries was a good thing;
- 58% said the foreign countries were doing a good job in fighting the Taliban;
- 63% said the foreign countries were doing a good job in reconstruction;
- 61% said the foreign countries were doing a good thing in training the Army/Police;
- 87% were aware of the presence of Canadians in Kandahar;
- 60% were “somewhat” or “very” positive about the work that Canadians were doing in Kandahar “because they see the Canadians establishing security and helping to reconstruct clinics and schools.”;
- 80% saw “some” or “a lot” of progress made in training the Army and Police;
- 74% saw “some” or “a lot” of progress in reconstruction and development in Kandahar;
- 45% believed that, in the end, the Afghan government, with foreign assistance, will prevail over the Taliban;
- But, 16% believed that the Taliban will win once the foreign troops leave;



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- 35% wanted the foreign troops to remain 1-5 years; but
- 31% wanted foreign troops to stay for “However long it takes to defeat the Taliban and return order.”

While a great deal more needs to be done before we can consider the task of reconstructing Afghanistan to have been completed, we can take pride in the fact that very significant progress has been and is being made as a result of the Canadian presence in Kandahar.

CONCLUSIONS

We conclude, therefore, in the strongest possible terms, that it is very much in Afghanistan’s national security interest to help keep the Taliban from regaining control of Kandahar.

A premature pull-out by Canada could hand these enemies of Afghanistan a huge victory, for Kandahar is “Vital Ground” in every sense—militarily, politically, and psychologically, and its loss would undermine all that we and our allies have achieved so far, and result in all of Canada's sacrifices to have been made in vain. We also need to remember that stating an “exit strategy” would be very dangerous, in that it would offer the Taliban the strategic option of simply waiting for us to leave.

We wish to emphasize the importance of supporting NATO in order to avoid a disastrous breakdown of the Alliance over Afghanistan. We have always held NATO to be a vital pillar of Canadian foreign policy, from our role as a founding member of the Alliance, to the present. Moreover, we must remember that this is a UN mandated

mission and that a mission failure could seriously affect the credibility of that institution.

In regard to Canada’s contribution in Kandahar Province, the CDA acknowledges that it will need to evolve in form and nature, in large part as a result of the increase in the capacity of the Afghan National Army Brigade in Kandahar to lead in security operations, an improvement made possible through the work of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams.

We believe that this mentoring relationship is one that can only be built up over time as both sides gain greater knowledge of each other, and greater confidence and trust in each other. That knowledge, confidence, and trust has now been established. It must not be broken.

The Conference of Defence Associations is therefore of the view that Canada must remain in Kandahar Province, beyond 2009.

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