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# Taliban kidnapper killed

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Afghan police killed a Taliban militant who allegedly played a key role in the July kidnappings of 23 South Koreans, officials said yesterday.

Mullah Mateen was among 16 militants killed in fighting late Monday in Ghazni province, where the group had been kidnapped, said Ghazni deputy Gov. Kazim Allayar.

A Taliban spokesperson said he was not able to comment on the claim, also made by a senior police official.

# Tories ramp up PR for Afghan mission

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**PAGE:** A6  
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The Conservative government rolled out Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan and senior officials yesterday as part of a renewed effort to shore up flagging support for the Afghan mission.

Arif Lalani insisted progress is being made toward building a civil society, and said security is improving in southern Afghanistan while acknowledging Canadian troops are fighting to retake ground they fought and died for last year.

"There is always a back and forth in war," the ambassador said in a conference call during a briefing at the Foreign Affairs Department.

"What we need to focus on is the net result. . . . there is actually more security, more Afghan National Army working with us, more Afghan National Police, more people at work than ever before in recent history, more kids in school.

"In short there's more economic development and security now than we had previously. You shouldn't just take a snapshot in time."

The briefing included officials from the Canadian army, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a senior Foreign Affairs official, as well as Lalani, who was appointed to the post in Kabul four months ago.

It's part of a wider government strategy that recently saw both Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, Defence Minister Peter MacKay and a senior Canadian general play up what they said are the successes of the mission.

With the Bloc Qu b cois and other opposition parties threatening to bring down the minority Conservative government over the Afghan mission, Lalani said he was disappointed at the way the war was being portrayed in the media at home.

Blaming the news media has become a routine complaint for both the Conservatives and the military, though some government departments have for most of the mission been inaccessible, often refusing interviews and redirecting questions to senior officials in Ottawa.

Following the roadside bombing death of Glyn Berry, the political director of Canada's provincial reconstruction base in Kandahar, the reconstruction side of the country's mission virtually ground to halt.

A development official, who spoke on background only, highlighted a planned distribution of food aid to Afghans in the coming days.

The delivery of parcels, apparently part of \$4.9 million in emergency food aid announced last year, comes after criticism from a Europe-based think-tank.

The Senlis Council has complained that refugees have been driven from their homes by fighting and are starving.

Senior government officials also said Canada will be sending 22 more civilian police officers to help the European Union train the Afghan National Police, who've been persistent targets of Taliban militants.



# HARPER DELAYS RETURN TO HILL; Starting new session of Parliament in October means a new throne speech and the spectre of a fall election

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**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** ALLAN WOODS  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
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Prime Minister Stephen Harper cut short the current session of Parliament yesterday and will bring MPs back to work a month later than scheduled -- on Oct. 16 -- with a new throne speech and the renewed threat of a fall federal election.

Nineteen months into the government's term, Harper said it is time to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"Canadians gave us a mandate for change but we're just," he said in a statement that did not give any hints about the way forward in the new session. Previously, he has said he will continue with the priorities set out in the last election rather than set a new policy agenda in the fall.

The move lets the government clear out legislation stalled by the opposition's refusal of support and the unwillingness of the Conservatives to submit to changes.

This applies to Harper's law-and-order agenda as well as environmental initiatives.

But in order to avoid a snap election the throne speech must have the support of a majority of MPs. That vote will likely launch a showdown over the Canadian mission in Afghanistan and its future after the current commitment ends in February 2009.

The government has promised a vote on the mission this fall.

"Our party will be ready for an election," Liberal leader Stephane Dion said in an interview from Quebec's Saguenay region.

"It's not what we want. We want the government to work, but if there is an election let me tell you that we'll be ready."

Dion also said he wants to see an environment bill that was rewritten by opposition parties be returned when Parliament resumes.

He also wants a plan to tackle poverty and a strategy for competitiveness in the manufacturing and resource sectors.

HARPER DELAYS RETURN TO HILL; Starting new session of Parliament in October means a new throne s

Gov. Gen. Micha lle Jean made the announcement on Harper's advice following a meeting of the cabinet's top-level priorities and planning committee yesterday afternoon. MPs were to have returned to work in Ottawa on Sept. 17 following a three-month summer break.

"I expect that you will see on Oct. 16 some new approaches and initiatives. And of course there was some legislation that was in this Parliament that didn't make it across the finish line that will obviously seek to restore as well," said Government House leader Peter Van Loan.

A senior Conservative explained the decision as one borne of frustration at the combative state of the current Parliament.

Harper, the Tory said, is "stymied and he can't do anything."

The official also described the move as a political gamble. It will either give the Tories a pass to govern freely until a budget is presented in spring 2008 or it will lead to an election the party thinks would at least result in another Tory minority.

"From our calculation there will not be a majority government. There will be another minority and we think it's going to be us," the Conservative said. "It's an election if necessary but not necessarily an election."

NDP leader Jack Layton criticized Harper for "locking out" MPs when they should be hard at work.

"Stephen Harper is wasting another month while we could be fighting climate change in order to write an unnecessary Throne Speech," Layton said in a statement.

# Soldier settles into life at home; After six months in Afghanistan, family and friends notice a change in corporal

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**BYLINE:** MARTY KLINKENBERG canadaeast news service  
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He is delighted to be home but John MacDonald still fights to adjust. The corporal in the Royal Canadian Regiment is just beginning to settle in to the gleaming split-level house in Lincoln that his new bride found, purchased and furnished in his absence.

"Things are a lot different," says MacDonald, who returned last month from a six-month mission in Afghanistan, with Karen Clifford curled up on the couch beside him. "Karen has been home alone for six months and has developed her own routine.

"So I am trying to help when I can tell that she needs it, while still staying out of her way at the same time. It has been something."

Although never in combat, MacDonald witnessed the ravages of war. Twenty-two Canadian soldiers died during his tour, including eight in one dreadful week that began on Easter Sunday.

MacDonald, who is based at CFB Gagetown and worked out of the battle group's headquarters at Kandahar Air Field, helped recover the effects of some of those men killed by roadside bombs in attacks three days apart. Seven of the eight soldiers had ties to New Brunswick.

"When I went to Afghanistan I knew I was going to a war and I knew some people were going to die, that it was only a matter of time," MacDonald says. "You don't want it to happen, of course, but it does.

"We went through their stuff, separated their personal belongings from their professional gear. They were handled with the dignity and the respect they deserved.

"We accept it. You become numb in a way, just do what needs to be done. It comes down to it being part of the job."

Clifford says friends have noticed that her husband is more withdrawn.

"Everyone keeps asking him what's wrong, because he is normally such a happy guy," she says.

"He has a shorter temper. I don't know if it is caused by having been around all of that testosterone for so long, or from being in that pressure cooker, but it's shorter for sure," she says.

Soldier settles into life at home; After six months in Afghanistan, family and friends notice a change in corporal

"But it's nothing extraordinary. I don't want to send him back or anything. I'm very happy to have him home. It is almost like I lived on pins and needles for six months, worrying about him.

"I'm not negative "" I try very hard to think positively "" but I'm realistic as well."

The couple, who met two years ago while MacDonald was out carousing with buddies, originally planned to marry this summer.

Instead, they were wed in January with only a few days' notice after he suddenly received word that he was headed for Afghanistan.

"He apologized, but I realized he didn't have a choice," says Clifford, a pediatric nurse at the Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital.

"They would have sent him to jail if he didn't go.

"But I did think about injuring him, though, so he couldn't leave."

A mother of three, the youngest a seven-year-old about to start Grade 3 this week, Clifford lost weight from stress while her husband was taking part in the NATO-led mission against the Taliban.

Not only did she work, but she also set up a new household.

"I picked out our house, bought it, packed up all of our belongings, unpacked them, spent a lot of money furnishing the house, and mowed the lawn a lot of the time," she said. "But it was my choice.

"I wanted to settle in."

MacDonald has been home since Aug. 4, and says it is likely that he will return to Kandahar if Canada extends its commitment to the mission beyond 2009.

More than 700 soldiers from New Brunswick participated in the same six-month tour as MacDonald.

# Minor baby booms at Cdn. bases related to deployment; Canadian military bases know them jokingly as 'tour babies'

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They're jokingly called "tour babies" — the crop of children that seems to appear during and after military tours of duty overseas.

Agencies that support military families across Canada say they've noticed signs of a baby boom in the wake of major deployments to Afghanistan — a rising demand for infant care and swelling numbers of pregnant women joining support groups on the home bases.

"I've seen lots of new little babies in the last little while," said Beth Corey, executive director of the Military Family Resource Centre at CFB Gagetown, home to about 4,000 soldiers.

Groups of five or six military wives, many of them pregnant, have regularly gathered for coffee over the summer to talk about their spouses' deployment to Afghanistan and to compare notes on their due dates.

"They were all about a month or two apart from each other," Corey said in an interview yesterday.

Soldiers from Gagetown trained at CFB Wainwright in Alberta last fall for this year's Afghanistan mission, and that's when Corey began to notice a lot of pregnant women.

"We kind of joked around and called them the 'Wainwright babies,'" she said.

Many of the Gagetown soldiers are young, just starting their families, so that could also help account for a boom in pregnancies.

Return ceremonies, which began at Gagetown in July and just wrapped up on Saturday, routinely saw wives bringing babies born during the deployment to meet their daddies for the first time.

"There's something about that reunion stuff," Corey said. "Absence certainly makes the heart grow fonder."

Capt. Mark Peebles began to notice a lot of babies and young children at Edmonton Garrison when he returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan last summer.

Peebles, 33, and his wife Kimberley, already had a seven-month-old son, Thomas, when he was sent to Afghanistan in February 2006.

Less than 48 hours before he left, he found out that his wife was pregnant again.

Minor baby booms at Cdn. bases related to deployment; Canadian military bases know them jokingly as 'tour babies'

"It gave me some trepidation, because I'm leaving her alone with a seven-month-old and she's pregnant and it's going to be that way for seven months," he said.

He arrived home in August 2006 and his son Luke was born in October.

"The guys talk amongst each other, and sometimes family planning takes a back seat to the heat of the moment when you come home. It's not unheard of."

Rosa Parlin, executive director of the Military Family Resource Centre at Edmonton Garrison, said the centre's nursery now has a waiting list of up to two years.

"We've never seen a wait list like that," she said.

"We tell people as soon as they get pregnant, 'If you're thinking of going back to work, put your name on the list.' "

Department of National Defence officials in Ottawa couldn't immediately supply any hard numbers on a possible Canadian military baby boom, but there's proof that the Iraq war has caused one in the United States.

About 19,000 soldiers returned to Fort Stewart, Ga., in the first months of 2006.

Nine months later the military hospital began delivering more than 100 babies a month, compared with 76 per month the previous year.

Fort Hood in Texas saw deliveries peak at 289 in March 2006, well above the 213 average.

And in Fort Campbell, Ky., the hospital is bracing to deliver 210 babies a month soon, nearly twice the usual number.

The baby rush is expected to follow last fall's return of about 20,000 soldiers with the 101st Airborne Division.

Minor baby booms at Cdn. bases related to deployment; Canadian military bases know them jokingly as 'tough

# Base baby boom about to blast off

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They're jokingly called "tour babies" -- the crop of children that seems to appear during and after military tours of duty overseas.

Agencies that support military families across Canada say they've noticed signs of a baby boom in the wake of major deployments to Afghanistan -- a rising demand for infant care and swelling numbers of pregnant women joining

support groups on the home bases.

"I've seen lots of new little babies in the last little while," said Beth Corey, executive director of the Military Family Resource Centre at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, home to about 4,000 soldiers.

Groups of five or six military wives, many of them pregnant, have regularly gathered for coffee over the summer to talk about their spouses' deployment to Afghanistan and to compare notes on their due dates.

"They were all about a month or two apart from each other," Corey said in an interview Tuesday.

Soldiers from Gagetown trained at CFB Wainwright in Alberta last fall for this year's Afghanistan mission, and that's when Corey began to notice a lot of pregnant women.

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"We tell people as soon as they get pregnant, 'If you're thinking of going back to work, put your name on the list.' "



# Afghan mission touted; Ambassador, officials say progress is being made

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**DATELINE:** OTTAWA

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---

The Conservative government rolled out Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan and senior officials yesterday as part of a renewed effort to shore up flagging support for the Afghan mission.

Arif Lalani insisted progress is being made toward building a civil society, and said security is improving in southern Afghanistan while acknowledging Canadian troops are fighting to retake ground they fought and died for last year.

"There is always a back and forth in war," the ambassador said in a conference call during a briefing at the Foreign Affairs Department. "What we need to focus on is the net result. If you look in Kandahar, and if you look throughout the rest of the country in Afghanistan, there is actually more security, more Afghan National Army working with us, more Afghan National Police, more people at work than ever before in recent history, more kids in school.

"In short, there's more economic development and security now than we had previous. You shouldn't just take a snapshot in time."

The briefing included officials from the Canadian army, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a senior Foreign Affairs official, as well as Lalani, who was appointed to the post in Kabul four months ago.

It's part of a wider government strategy that recently saw both Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, Defence Minister Peter MacKay and a senior Canadian general play up what they said are the successes of the mission.

With the Bloc Quebecois and other opposition parties threatening to bring down the minority Conservative government over the Afghan mission, Lalani said he was disappointed at the way the war was being portrayed at home.

"Whether the progress is reported or not, the fact is progress is being made and the people here see it every day," said the career diplomat.

Blaming the news media for the reluctance of Canadians to embrace the mission has become a routine complaint for both the Conservatives and the military.

# Harper plans throne speech; It's time to launch next phase of mandate, PM says

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**DATELINE:** OTTAWA

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper moved to open a fresh chapter in the life of his minority government, announcing yesterday he would begin a new session of Parliament on Oct. 16 with a revised set of priorities outlined in a throne speech.

This new policy framework, which is expected to focus heavily on economic issues, will serve as an enticement to voters who so far have seemed unwilling to hand the Conservatives a majority in the Commons.

But with the speech comes another threat of a snap election. It must pass muster with grumbling opposition parties who want an end to the combat mission in Afghanistan.

Just hours before Harper was to board a plane to Australia to meet with Asia–Pacific leaders, he issued a statement saying he had informed Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean of his intentions.

"Now it's time to launch the next phase of our mandate," Harper said.

"Strong leadership, focused on results, will continue to guide our Government as we work to make our country even stronger and even better for all of Canada's families."

Harper's first throne speech, delivered last April, was a tight plan focused principally on five priorities such as lowering the GST by one percentage point.

Once the threat of a spring election passed this year, the Conservatives were left with a nearly empty to–do list.

Government House Leader Peter Van Loan chalked that up to a minority government that has well outlasted the time frame most people expected.

"We're now moving on to a longer–term phase with what we intend to do for the next two years until an election date," said Van Loan.

"It will certainly be a speech that looks at long–term priorities." Themes expected to be touched on in the speech include the environment and Canadian sovereignty, particularly in the North.

The opposition, meanwhile, is focused on what Harper will say about the military mission in Afghanistan.

The minority government could fall if the three opposition parties do not vote in favour of the speech.

Harper has already promised to put the question of continuing the deployment past February, 2009 to the Commons. Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said yesterday he wants to hear Harper say specifically what the question will be and how his own MPs intend to vote.

"We, as Liberals, can't support a Speech from the Throne without knowing where we're going with this war," Dion told reporters.

Proroguing Parliament – the act of ending a session – also entails a host of other complications, chief among them the fate of pieces of legislation that were still on the order paper.

Ontario Attorney General Michael Bryant lashed out at the Tories for not waiting to prorogue until a series of anti-crime bills had passed the Senate.

"Killing the justice bills makes a mockery of the Harper government's supposed commitment to fighting crime," Bryant told The Canadian Press.

Van Loan said the government would examine possible bills that could be resurrected, including bills that raise the age of sexual consent and introduce mandatory sentences for gun crimes.

Bringing the legislation back involves an Order of Parliament that must be initiated by the government, and needs majority approval in the House.

The Liberals and NDP have pushed for an environmental bill, C-30, to be returned.

# Military tours, more babies: Coincidence?

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EDMONTON – They're jokingly called "tour babies" – the crop of children that seems to appear during and after military tours of duty overseas.

Agencies that support military families across Canada say they've noticed signs of a baby boom in the wake of major deployments to Afghanistan – a rising demand for infant care and swelling numbers of pregnant women joining support groups on the home bases.

"I've seen lots of new little babies in the last little while," said Beth Corey, executive director of the Military Family Resource Centre at CFB Gagetown, N.B., home to about 4,000 soldiers.

Groups of five or six military wives, many of them pregnant, have regularly gathered for coffee over the summer to talk about their spouses' deployment to Afghanistan and to compare notes on their due dates.

"They were all about a month or two apart from each other," Corey said in an interview Tuesday.

Soldiers from Gagetown trained at CFB Wainwright in Alberta last fall for this year's Afghanistan mission, and that's when Corey began to notice a lot of pregnant women.

"We kind of joked around and called them the 'Wainwright babies,'" she said.

Many of the Gagetown soldiers are young, just starting their families, so that could also help account for a boom in pregnancies. Return ceremonies, which began at Gagetown in July and just wrapped up on Saturday, routinely saw wives bringing babies born during the deployment to meet their daddies for the first time.

"There's something about that reunion stuff," Corey said. "Absence certainly makes the heart grow fonder."

Capt. Mark Peebles began to notice a lot of babies and young children at Edmonton Garrison when he returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan last summer.

"I've heard the term a couple of times, that so-and-so is a tour baby. It's not uncommon either before or right after a tour that families have another addition," he said.

Peebles, 33, and his wife Kimberley, already had a seven-month-old son, Thomas, when he was sent to Afghanistan in February 2006. Less than 48 hours before he left, he found out that his wife was pregnant again.

"It gave me some trepidation, because I'm leaving her alone with a seven-month-old and she's pregnant and it's going to be that way for seven months," he said.

He arrived home in August 2006 and his son Luke was born in October. "The guys talk amongst each other, and sometimes family planning takes a back seat to the heat of the moment when you come home. It's not

unheard of."

Rosa Parlin, executive director of the Military Family Resource Centre at Edmonton Garrison, said the centre's nursery now has a waiting list of up to two years.

"We've never seen a wait list like that," she said.

"We tell people as soon as they get pregnant, 'If you're thinking of going back to work, put your name on the list.' "

The centre's daycare can take a total of 90 kids, including 12 babies. Up until about three years ago, it would often offer unused spaces to civilian families. Not anymore, said Parlin.

"Now it's straight military."

# Voice of the people

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**PUBLICATION:** The  
Chronicle–Herald  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**SECTION:** Letters  
**PAGE:** A5  
**WORD COUNT:** 779

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The Chronicle Herald calls the presence of Surete du Quebec undercover cops at the Montebello summit "a minor incident" ("Inquiry? Not yet," Aug. 28 editorial). Wrong.

First, it is likely the three officers were agents provocateurs. If they were, the police were conspiring to incite violence.

Second, the fact that they were masked and dressed as hood-lums and one carried a rock could well have inspired an angry protester to take a violent step. In that case, the Surete would have incited violence even had they not intended to. Simply the presence of these officers in the crowd put people at risk of harm.

Third, suppose the undercover cops had gone undetected. Even so, their presence in the crowd as rock-wielding miscreants for all to see would have stained the protest. If the officers were simply there in the service of crowd control, they need not have been masked and in full leather regalia. This might seem a small point, but it brings us to the fourth point, which isn't small at all. We have here a case of police being used, or using themselves, for political ends.

The Herald might well be right that a full public inquiry into the conduct of the Surete du Quebec would neither get to the bottom of things nor help to reform police behaviour. So what will? Tough reporting and editorializing would be a step in the right direction. I'm not expecting The Chronicle Herald to take the lead.

Mark Mercer, Halifax

In the article "Violence in their veins" (Aug. 29) Coun. Dawn Sloane says she is concerned about the randomness of the violent attacks that took place on the Commons and at the Forum.

Ultimately, no violence can be justified unless it is in self-defence. But in our society, and our world for that matter, violence is used as a means to impose ways of life on other people, make economic gain and to scare others into submission if they dare stand up.

The prime example of such a violent force in the world is the U.S. The violence it has used in just the past decade is horrific. Its double standards in justifying such violence are even more horrifying. If, in such a world, where the U.S. can bomb and impose embargoes on innocent people to the tune of over 100,000 deaths in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere – not to mention the suffering caused – how can we even begin to address violence on our streets?

The U.S. and even our own government say violence is justified when it suits their aims. How can we accept that? If Coun. Sloane wants to address the use of violence, we must address those who teach it, exemplify it, glorify it and use it as a means to an end in front of the whole world!

Kevin Corkill, Halifax

I am shocked that four years in prison is considered an appropriate sentence for the crime of rape (Aug. 29 story). International news has been giving attention to the frequency of rape in many countries around the world and their struggles to have rape taken seriously by their local authorities. These articles come from countries such as Afghanistan and Sierra Leone and I have always felt lucky to live in Canada in this respect.

After reading the Aug. 29 front page, I feel nothing but confusion and shock. I thought that as Canadians, we were better protected by our judicial system. I thought Canada took rape seriously.

According to this particular story, a man rapes a 12-year-old girl at knifepoint, is given a four-year prison sentence and this is felt to be a condemnation of rape. Four years in prison is an inconvenience. It is nothing compared to the pain inflicted upon the individual raped.

Concurrent to this front-page report is one regarding the rise of violence for the sake of violence here in Halifax. Well, of course. Young offenders and adults alike can get away with it.

Michelle Hollett, Peggys Cove

Re: "Potty training from birth" (Aug. 29).

I am so pleased to find that there are mothers in this generation who want to get their babies out of diapers as soon as possible. These bulky, expensive, non-recyclable items manufactured these days make no sense!

Some 50 years ago, when my children were babies, a diaper was a piece of cloth which, when soiled, had to be washed and dried for reuse – a big chore. I soon learned to read the "signs" when something was going to "happen," and got the child to the potty, using some cute phrase for the activity which soon became a "password." There never was any big deal made of "training," but by the age of one, they managed to communicate their needs to stay clean!

My apologies to the diaper industry, and congratulations to the "diaper-free" movement!

Zuze Aleksis, Halifax

# Tories seeking fresh start; Ottawa expected to focus on economy in parliamentary session to open Oct. 16

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**PUBLICATION:** The Chronicle–Herald

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**SECTION:** Canada

**PAGE:** A5

**ILLUSTRATION:** Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his minority Conservative government will outline a revised policy plan in a throne speech on Oct. 16.(TOM HANSON / CP); Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his minority Conservative government will outline a revised policy plan in a throne speech on Oct. 16.(TOM HANSON / CP)

**WORD COUNT:** 566

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OTTAWA – Prime Minister Stephen Harper moved to open a fresh chapter in the life of his minority government, announcing Tuesday he would begin a new session of Parliament on Oct. 16 with a revised set of priorities outlined in a throne speech.

This new policy framework, which is expected to focus heavily on economic issues, will serve as an enticement to voters who so far have seemed unwilling to hand the Conservatives a majority in the Commons.

But with the speech comes another threat of a snap election. It must pass muster with grumbling opposition parties who want an end to the combat mission in Afghanistan.

Just hours before Harper was to board a plane to Australia to meet with Asia–Pacific leaders, he issued a statement saying he had informed Gov.–Gen Michaele Jean of his intentions.

"Now it's time to launch the next phase of our mandate," Harper said.

"Strong leadership, focused on results, will continue to guide our Government as we work to make our country even stronger and even better for all of Canada's families."

Harper's first throne speech, delivered last April, was a tight plan focused principally on five priorities such as lowering the GST by one percentage point. Once the threat of a spring election passed this year, the Conservatives were left with a nearly empty to–do list.

Government House Leader Peter Van Loan chalked that up to a minority government that has well outlasted the time frame most people expected.

"We're now moving on to a longer–term phase with what we intend to do for the next two years until an election date," said Van Loan.

"It will certainly be a speech that looks at long–term priorities." Themes expected to be touched on in the speech include the environment and Canadian sovereignty, particularly in the North.

The opposition, meanwhile, is focused on what Harper will say about the military mission in Afghanistan. The minority government could fall if the three opposition parties do not vote in favour of the speech.

Harper has already promised to put the question of continuing the deployment past February, 2009, to the Commons. Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said Tuesday he wants to hear Harper say specifically what the



question will be, and how his own MPs intend to vote.

"We as Liberals can't support a Speech from the Throne without knowing where we're going with this war," Dion told reporters.

Proroguing Parliament – the act of ending a session – also entails a host of other complications, chief among them the fate of pieces of legislation that were still on the order paper.

Ontario Attorney General Michael Bryant lashed out at the Tories for not waiting to prorogue until a series of anti-crime bills had passed the Senate.

"Killing the justice bills makes a mockery of the Harper government's supposed commitment to fighting crime," Bryant told The Canadian Press.

Van Loan said the government would examine possible bills that could be resurrected, including bills that raise the age of sexual consent and introduce mandatory sentences for gun crimes. Bringing the legislation back involves an Order of Parliament that must be initiated by the government, and needs majority approval in the House.

The Liberals and NDP have pushed for an environmental bill, C-30, to be returned. The Clean Air Act was actually an anti-climate change government bill, which was eventually so heavily amended by the opposition that the Tories no longer wanted it.

NDP Leader Jack Layton derided the decision to prorogue and delay the start of Parliament by a month.

"By locking MPs out, Stephen Harper is showing utter disregard for the work that has already been done, especially on the climate change and clean air bill. Stephen Harper is wasting another month while we could be fighting climate change in order to write an unnecessary throne speech," Layton said in a statement.

# Afghanistan ambassador: Progress is being made

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**PUBLICATION:** The  
Chronicle–Herald  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**SECTION:** Canada  
**PAGE:** A4  
**BYLINE:** Murray Brewster  
**WORD COUNT:** 409

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OTTAWA – The Conservative government rolled out Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan and senior officials Tuesday as part of a renewed effort to shore up flagging support for the Afghan mission.

Arif Lalani insisted progress is being made toward building a civil society, and said security is improving in southern Afghanistan while acknowledging Canadian troops are fighting to retake ground they fought and died for last year.

"There is always a back and forth in war," the ambassador said in a conference call during a briefing at the Foreign Affairs Department. "What we need to focus on is the net result. If you look in Kandahar, and if you look throughout the rest of the country in Afghanistan, there is actually more security, more Afghan National Army working with us, more Afghan National Police, more people at work than ever before in recent history, more kids in school.

"In short there's more economic development and security now than we had previous. You shouldn't just take a snapshot in time."

The briefing included officials from the Canadian army, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a senior Foreign Affairs official, as well as Lalani, who was appointed to the post in Kabul four months ago.

It's part of a wider government strategy that recently saw both Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, Defence Minister Peter MacKay and a senior Canadian general play up what they said are the successes of the mission.

With the Bloc Quebecois and other opposition parties threatening to bring down the minority Conservative government over the Afghan mission, Lalani said he was disappointed at the way the war was being portrayed at home.

"Whether the progress is reported or not, the fact is progress is being made and the people here see it every day," said the career diplomat.

"What frustrates me is I wish that Canadians would be able to see the full story in the media reporting."

Blaming the news media for the reluctance of Canadians to embrace the mission has become a routine complaint for both the Conservatives and the military. While the army has been relatively open by embedding journalists with combat troops, other government departments – responsible for civilian aid – have for most of the mission been inaccessible, often refusing interviews and redirecting questions to senior officials in Ottawa.

Following the roadside bombing death of Glyn Berry, the political director of Canada's provincial reconstruction base in Kandahar, the reconstruction side of the country's mission virtually ground to halt.

Progress on development in the dirt-poor region only started to become apparent last winter.

# PM plans throne speech Oct. 16; Harper delays return of Parliament to unveil fresh plan for country

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**PUBLICATION:** The Guardian (Charlottetown)

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**SECTION:** The Province/Canada

**PAGE:** A5

**SOURCE:** CP

**DATELINE:** OTTAWA

**WORD COUNT:** 229

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper will delay the return of Parliament by a month and resume Oct. 16 with a new session – and a new plan.

Harper issued a release Tuesday saying he will recommend to Gov.-Gen. Michaëlle Jean that she prorogue Parliament, allowing him to present a throne speech laying out a fresh plan for the country. "The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation. We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election . . . Now it's time to launch the next phase of our mandate."

The move is seen as an attempt to reinvigorate his minority Conservative government, which has been unable to pull far ahead of the Liberals and reach majority territory in the polls.

It's also a challenge to the opposition parties to support the government's new plan – or bring it down and trigger an election. The Bloc Québécois has already threatened to vote against the government over the military mission in Afghanistan, but the party doesn't have the votes to defeat Harper alone.

Last month, Harper said the government will focus on its current priorities, but over the longer term. He said those priorities include defending Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic, keeping the economy strong, and tackling crime.

# Officials say kidnapper among militants killed in clashes

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**PUBLICATION:** The Telegram (St. John's)

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**SECTION:** International

**PAGE:** A10

**SOURCE:** The Associated Press

**BYLINE:** Amir Shah

**DATELINE:** Kabul, Afghanistan

**WORD COUNT:** 311

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Afghan forces said Tuesday they killed a Taliban commander behind the kidnapping of South Korean church workers, less than a week after the hostages were let go under a deal seen as a propaganda coup for the hardline Islamic militia.

A Taliban spokesman denied any of its commanders was killed, and accused the government of exaggerating the group's battlefield losses. Afghan and U.S.-led coalition forces said at least 39 suspected insurgents had been killed in several clashes since Monday.

The Taliban commander, Mullah Mateen, was killed along with 16 other militants in fighting late Monday and early Tuesday in the central province of Ghazni, where the insurgents seized 23 South Koreans on July 19, said Ghazni Deputy Gov. Kazim Allayar and a senior police officer.

Ghazni has seen several military operations since the captives' release Aug. 29 and Aug. 30, possibly reflecting a desire by the Afghan government to assert its authority on the rebellious region following the abductions.

Allayar said Mateen played a key role in the kidnapping, including telephone negotiations with the government in the early days of the crisis. He said another Taliban leader also wanted for the abduction, Mullah Abdullah Jan, remained at large.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said seven insurgents were killed in the overnight clash, and described all of them as ordinary fighters. He said the Taliban did not have a commander called Mullah Mateen.

In the past, Afghan authorities have often made claims to have killed local Taliban commanders that turned out to be wrong. At the same time, Taliban spokesman have played down or lied about their battlefield losses.

Two of the Korean hostages were slain soon after the kidnapping.

Two women were released later during the Taliban's negotiations with South Korea, and the remaining 19 were freed after Seoul repeated a long-standing commitment to withdraw its 200 soldiers here by year's end and prevent Christian missionaries from travelling to Afghanistan.

# Harper to open fresh chapter

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**PUBLICATION:** The Telegram (St. John's)

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**SECTION:** Provincial/National

**PAGE:** A8

**SOURCE:** The Canadian Press

**BYLINE:** Jennifer Ditchburn

**DATELINE:** Ottawa

**WORD COUNT:** 596

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This new policy framework, which is expected to focus heavily on economic issues, will serve as an enticement to voters who so far have seemed unwilling to hand the Conservatives a majority in the Commons.

But with the speech comes another threat of a snap election. It must pass muster with grumbling opposition parties who want an end to the combat mission in Afghanistan.

Just hours before Harper was to board a plane to Australia to meet with Asia-Pacific leaders, he issued a statement saying he had informed Gov.-Gen Michaëlle Jean of his intentions.

"Now it's time to launch the next phase of our mandate," Harper said.

"Strong leadership, focused on results, will continue to guide our Government as we work to make our country even stronger and even better for all of Canada's families."

Harper's first throne speech, delivered last April, was a tight plan focused principally on five priorities such as lowering the GST by one percentage point. Once the threat of a spring election passed this year, the Conservatives were left with a nearly empty to-do list.

Government House Leader Peter Van Loan chalked that up to a minority government that has well outlasted the time frame most people expected.

"We're now moving on to a longer-term phase with what we intend to do for the next two years until an election date," said Van Loan.

"It will certainly be a speech that looks at long-term priorities." Themes expected to be touched on in the speech include the environment and Canadian sovereignty, particularly in the North.

The opposition, meanwhile, is focused on what Harper will say about the military mission in Afghanistan. The minority government could fall if the three opposition parties do not vote in favour of the speech.

Harper has already promised to put the question of continuing the deployment past February, 2009, to the Commons. Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said Tuesday he wants to hear Harper say specifically what the question will be, and how his own MPs intend to vote.

"We as Liberals can't support a Speech from the Throne without knowing where we're going with this war," Dion told reporters.

Proroguing Parliament – the act of ending a session – also entails a host of other complications, chief among them the fate of pieces of legislation that were still on the order paper.

Ontario Attorney General Michael Bryant lashed out at the Tories for not waiting to prorogue until a series of anti-crime bills had passed the Senate.

Van Loan said the government would examine possible bills that could be resurrected, including bills that raise the age of sexual consent and introduce mandatory sentences for gun crimes. Bringing the legislation back involves an Order of Parliament that must be initiated by the government, and needs majority approval in the House.

The Liberals and NDP have pushed for an environmental bill, C-30, to be returned. The Clean Air Act was actually an anti-climate change government bill, which was eventually so heavily amended by the opposition that the Tories no longer wanted it.

Van Loan said his government won't be bringing C-30 back. He dismissed it as dealing with past Liberal failures on the environment and said the Conservatives prefer to look to the future with their own greenhouse-gas reduction plan for major industries, as well as a host of other funding measures.

NDP Leader Jack Layton derided the decision to prorogue and delay the start of Parliament by a month.

"By locking MPs out, Stephen Harper is showing utter disregard for the work that has already been done, especially on the climate change and clean air bill. Stephen Harper is wasting another month while we could be fighting climate change in order to write an unnecessary throne speech," Layton said in a statement.

# Dion: Harper government muddying debate on Afghan mission extension

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**DATE:** 2007.09.04  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICS DEFENCE  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 98

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TORONTO (CP) \_ Liberal Leader Stephane Dion says the Tories are hiding their true intentions on Afghanistan.

He tells the Globe and Mail the Conservative government is trying to assuage public opinion by muddying the debate over the controversial mission.

Dion says the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper is signalling that it doesn't expect to extend the combat-heavy Kandahar mission past 2009.

But Harper refuses to make unequivocal official statements to its allies and Canadians, the Liberal leader argues.

He adds the oft-repeated promise of a vote in Parliament on Afghanistan is particularly confusing.

Dion says that's because Harper won't say what the question will be, or even which side he'll take.

``How will they vote on their own vote," Dion asked. ``Why don't they say that today?"

(the Globe and Mail)



# Top military cop cleared in secret investigation into Afghan detainees

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**DATE:** 2007.09.04  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 577

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OTTAWA (CP) \_ Canada's top military cop was cleared Tuesday of potential criminal wrongdoing in the ongoing legal controversy involving Afghan detainees.

The Canadian army says there's no evidence to support a prosecution of naval Capt. Steve Moore, the provost marshal.

The conclusion was reached following an investigation by two senior RCMP officers, who'd been called in by the military after allegations of abuse of Taliban prisoners surfaced last winter.

A spokeswoman for the National Investigative Service \_ a branch of the Canadian Forces \_ characterized the investigation, which to this point had remained a secret, as procedural.

"The provost marshal himself is in the direct chain of command and the allegations had a potential criminal angle," said Capt. Cindi Tessier.

The decision to conclude the investigation comes as human rights lawyers are set to appear in court Wednesday for another round in the legal battle over detainees.

Concern that prisoners captured by Canadians and handed over to Afghan authorities faced possible abuse and even torture, has spawned a dizzying array of investigations and court actions.

Tessier said that a separate national investigative probe is still underway into whether individual military police officers in Afghanistan could be held accountable if abuse has taken place.

Amnesty International Canada and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association complained last February to the Military Police Complaints Commission, accusing military cops of exhibiting "a wilful blindness to the consequences of transferring detainees and that they may have aided or abetted the torture of detainees."

The agency is still investigating that accusation, said Stan Blythe, chief of staff to the commissioner.

"We were aware the (military) police were looking at the possible criminal side of this and have received a copy of their investigation," he said.

"We're aware of it and will make use of the information they've discovered, but it doesn't close the investigation for us."

To date, Canadian authorities in Kandahar have received six complaints from Afghans who say they were abused after being handed over to local authorities.

Amir Attaran, the University of Ottawa law professor who's been pushing the issue of detainee rights, was mystified at how RCMP investigators could clear the provost marshal when Defence Minister Peter MacKay acknowledged the alleged cases of abuse last spring, when he was foreign affairs minister.

“Peter MacKay has said Canadian investigators have heard, quote, serious allegations of torture; he called them serious, that was his word,” said Attaran.

“How can he call them serious when his own staff now says there's no evidence?”

Both Amnesty and the civil liberties association have launched a court challenge, trying to stop the transfer of prisoners to Afghan jails, but that action has been bogged down in a quagmire of legal wrangling.

The case had been set to go before a Federal Court judge last spring, when the Conservative government announced it had reached a new understanding with the Afghans, giving Canadian authorities better access to detainees. The challenge was put on hold until the human rights groups could review the deal.

A further snag developed in early July when officials at National Defence denied an application for documents filed by Amnesty lawyers.

The records were deemed too sensitive to be released and when human rights lawyers challenged it, the government invoked an unusual section of the Canada Evidence Act, which dropped a cloak of secrecy around the entire challenge.

Paul Champ, a lawyer for Amnesty, said in addition to fighting for the Afghan documents, his group has launched a charter challenge, hoping to quash the government's power to force secret hearings on court applications.

“The government secrecy privilege is an exceptional power that should only be used sparingly in a democracy,” he said.

“Holding hearings in secret doesn't allow for oversight by the justice system, the media and the public.”

The Canadian Association of Journalists has signalled its intention to intervene in the charter case, supporting Amnesty's application as it relates to the Evidence Act.

# Harper to open fresh chapter with new Throne Speech

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**DATE:** 2007.09.04  
**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE POLITICS  
**PUBLICATION:** cpw  
**WORD COUNT:** 619

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“It will certainly be a speech that looks at long-term priorities.”

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# Conservatives ramp up public relations offensive over Afghan mission

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**DATE:** 2007.09.04

**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS SOCIAL

**PUBLICATION:** cpw

**WORD COUNT:** 605

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OTTAWA (CP) \_ The Conservative government rolled out Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan and senior officials Tuesday as part of a renewed effort to shore up flagging support for the Afghan mission.

Arif Lalani insisted progress is being made toward building a civil society, and said security is improving in southern Afghanistan while acknowledging Canadian troops are fighting to retake ground they fought and died for last year.

“There is always a back and forth in war,” the ambassador said in a conference call during a briefing at the Foreign Affairs Department.

“What we need to focus on is the net result. If you look in Kandahar, and if you look throughout the rest of the country in Afghanistan, there is actually more security, more Afghan National Army working with us, more Afghan National Police, more people at work than ever before in recent history, more kids in school.

“In short there's more economic development and security now than we had previous. You shouldn't just take a snapshot in time.”

The briefing included officials from the Canadian army, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a senior Foreign Affairs official, as well as Lalani, who was appointed to the post in Kabul four months ago.

It's part of a wider government strategy that recently saw both Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, Defence Minister Peter MacKay and a senior Canadian general play up what they said are the successes of the mission.

With the Bloc Quebecois and other opposition parties threatening to bring down the minority Conservative government over the Afghan mission, Lalani said he was disappointed at the way the war was being portrayed at home.

“Whether the progress is reported or not, the fact is progress is being made and the people here see it every day,” said the career diplomat.

“What frustrates me is I wish that Canadians would be able to see the full story in the media reporting.”

Blaming the news media for the reluctance of Canadians to embrace the mission has become a routine complaint for both the Conservatives and the military. While the army has been relatively open by embedding journalists with combat troops, other government departments \_ responsible for civilian aid \_ have for most of the mission been inaccessible, often refusing interviews and redirecting questions to senior officials in Ottawa.

Following the roadside bombing death of Glyn Berry, the political director of Canada's provincial reconstruction base in Kandahar, the reconstruction side of the country's mission virtually ground to halt. Progress on development in the dirt-poor region only started to become apparent last winter.

A development official, who spoke on background only, highlighted a planned distribution of food aid to Afghans in the coming days, saying he hopes the media will take note of the events, one of which will take place ``within 500 metres of Kandahar Airfield."

The delivery of parcels, apparently part of \$4.9 million in emergency food aid announced last year, comes after repeated criticism from a Europe-based think-tank. The Senlis Council has complained that refugees, driven from their homes by fighting and living in camps, are starving.

A spokeswoman for CIDA said the food would be delivered under the banner of the United Nations World Food Program, but declined to say where the aid was going for fear of Taliban reprisals.

Edward McCormick, a Canadian working for the Senlis Council in Kandahar, said the agency has seen ``no evidence" of CIDA's prior aid efforts.

Senior government officials also said Canada will be sending 22 more civilian police officers to help the European Union train the Afghan National Police, who've been persistent targets of Taliban militants.

The agreement with Germany was struck at this summer's G8 meeting.

The Germans, who've been reluctant to send combat troops to confront militants in the south, were made responsible for training the fledging Afghan police forces, but the program was recently described by U.S. officials as a disaster.

# Afghan militant who kidnapped South Koreans killed: government

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**DATE:** 2007.09.04

**KEYWORDS:** INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE JUSTICE

**PUBLICATION:** cpw

**WORD COUNT:** 70

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KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) \_ Afghan police killed a Taliban militant who allegedly played a key role in the July kidnappings of 23 South Korean church workers, officials said Tuesday.

Mullah Mateen was among 16 militants killed in fighting late Monday and early Tuesday in Ghazni province, where the group was kidnapped, said Ghazni deputy Gov. Kazim Allayar.

A Taliban spokesman said he was not able to comment on the claim, which a senior police official also made.

# Canada sending more police trainers to Afghanistan

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**KEYWORDS:** DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS SOCIAL

**PUBLICATION:** bnw

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OTTAWA – Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan and senior government officials have offered a barrage of statistics about the military mission there, hoping to shore up flagging support at home.

Arif Lalani said progress is being made toward building a civil society, and said security is improving in Kandahar province, as well as elsewhere throughout southern Afghanistan.

Speaking at a technical briefing in Ottawa via conference call, Lalani brushed aside reports that Canadian troops are battling to retake ground they fought for last year, saying there is always back and forth in a war.

Senior government officials say Canada will be sending 22 more civilian police officers to help train the Afghan National Police, who've been persistent targets of Taliban militants.

A development official highlighted a planned distribution of food aid to Afghans in the coming days, saying he hopes the media will take note of the event, which will take place within 500 metres of Kandahar Airfield.

But the official could not say whether the food is going to refugees or to the Afghan National Army camp, which is within 500 metres of NATO's principal southern base.



# Harper taking calculated risks with new session

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**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A19  
**BYLINE:** Chantal Hebert  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 492

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For months, it has been obvious that Canadians will not give Prime Minister Stephen Harper a stronger hand unless he puts more policy cards on the table.

To do that, he will be playing poker with the fate of his minority government by opening a new session of Parliament with a throne speech on Oct. 16. It will be followed by an automatic confidence vote a few days later.

By definition, the speech will have to be different from the one initially brought forward by the Conservative minority government in April 2006.

Back then, Harper focused on a short set of election promises designed to reassure voters as to the mildness of his intentions, rather than steer the federal ship in decisively new directions.

The 2006 speech was more grocery list than road map. The hope was that once given a taste of Conservative policies, voters would crave more. But that didn't happen.

It is no accident that the bulk of the issues that have most preoccupied Parliament over the past 19 months have involved matters – such as climate change and the Afghan deployment – that were not on the Conservative radar in the 2006 campaign.

Harper's 2006 platform ultimately fell well short of a full-fledged governing program. It involved commitments – on issues like income trusts and equalization – that the Prime Minister could not bring himself to implement.

This second throne speech will have to be substantial.

It will take more than the promise of another one-point drop in the GST and a law-and-order agenda to bring Canadians around to re-electing the Conservatives and do so with a majority to boot.

But the more comprehensive the throne speech, the harder it will also be for the opposition parties to support.

That's why yesterday's announcement involves not one but two calculated risks on the part of the government.

The first is that one of the other three parties will hold its nose and support the government. The other is that, short of that, the Conservatives would emerge on top in a federal election held between now and the end of

the year.

The government may not be where it would like to be in public opinion polls, but neither are the opposition parties, in particular the Liberals. Yet neither they nor the NDP are in a position to extend the life of the government without eating their own words on some defining issues.

Jack Layton would have to back an agenda that will certainly not include the immediate troop withdrawal from the south of Afghanistan that the NDP has been advocating.

Stephane Dion would have to endorse the economic vision of the government as well as a program that falls short of the Kyoto prescriptions on climate change.

So far, Gilles Duceppe has kept the Conservatives in office. But he will now have to factor in whether there will ever be a better time for what many expect to be his last campaign as Bloc Quebecois leader than against the backdrop of a Quebec deployment in Afghanistan.

By proroguing the House and setting a new session in motion, Harper has placed the fate of the 39th Parliament in the hands of the opposition. They will get to decide whether the Oct. 16 Speech from the Throne swiftly becomes the Conservative re-election platform. Harper's own preference is far from clear.

Chantal Hebert's national affairs column appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

# PM ends session of Parliament; Oct. 16 throne speech sets stage for showdown with opposition, raises spectre of fall election

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050130  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Star  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Ont  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A19  
**ILLUSTRATION:** CP file photo Prime Minister Stephen Harper says his Tory government is "just getting started" on its mandate for change. ;  
**BYLINE:** Allan Woods  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 598

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper cut short the current session of Parliament yesterday and will bring MPs back to work Oct. 16 with a throne speech and the renewed threat of a fall election.

Nineteen months into the government's term, Harper said it is time to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"Canadians gave us a mandate for change but we're just getting started," he said in a statement that did not give any hints about the way forward in the new session. Previously, he has said he will continue with the priorities set out in the last election rather than set a new policy agenda for the fall session.

The move lets the government clear out a pipeline of legislation that has been stalled by the opposition's refusal to support the Tory agenda and the unwillingness of the government to submit to changes. This applies to Harper's law-and-order agenda, as well as environmental initiatives brought forward by the government and opposition parties last spring.

"I expect that you will see on Oct. 16 some new approaches and initiatives. And of course there was some legislation that was in this Parliament that didn't make it across the finish line that we will obviously seek to restore as well," said government House leader Peter Van Loan.

The delayed return to Ottawa – MPs were supposed to be back Sept. 17 – will also free up Conservative party workers to help Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory in the campaign for the Oct. 10 provincial election.

But the throne speech will be subject to a vote in the House of Commons and if it's not supported by a majority of MPs, the government will fall, triggering an election.

The speech will launch a showdown over the future of the Canadian combat mission in Afghanistan. The government has promised a vote on the question of continuing the mission past the current commitment of February 2009, but Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said he wants a commitment that Canadian soldiers will move to a non-combat role.

Failing that, he is demanding the exact wording of the question that will be put to MPs, so that each party can take a clear position before deciding whether they want to risk sparking an election.

"Our party will be ready for an election," he said in an interview from Quebec. "It's not what we want. We want the government to work, but if there is an election, let me tell you that we'll be ready and we'll have a really appealing option to offer to Canadians instead of this very right-wing, Bush-like administration we have now."

Dion also said that when Parliament resumes, he wants to see the return of an environment bill that was rewritten by the opposition.

A senior Conservative explained the decision to end the session as one born of frustration at the combative state of the current Parliament. Harper, the Tory said, is "stymied and he can't do anything."

The official described the move as a political gamble. It will either give the Tories a pass to govern freely until a budget is presented in spring 2008, or it will lead to an election the party thinks would at least result in another Tory minority.

"From our calculation there will not be a majority government. There will be another minority and we think it's going to be us," the Conservative said.

NDP Leader Jack Layton criticized Harper for "locking out" MPs when they should be hard at work.

Layton and NDP advisers would not discuss what the party wants to see in a new throne speech, though the party has taken the strongest line on Afghanistan by calling for an immediate pullout from fighting.

Beyond calls for a retreat from front-line fighting in Afghanistan, Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe said he wants the government to introduce legislation to limit federal spending in areas of provincial responsibility.

# Plan aims to win over doubting Canadians; As Afghanistan debate looms, 22 police to be sent to Kabul

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Met  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A18  
**BYLINE:** Bruce Campion-Smith  
**SOURCE:** Toronto Star  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 399

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Canadian development and diplomatic efforts are making a difference to everyday lives in Kandahar, says Canada's ambassador in Afghanistan, as the federal government begins a new strategy to win over Canadians skeptical about the mission.

"If you look in Kandahar and if you look in the rest of the country ... there actually is more security, more Afghan National army working with us, more Afghan National Police, more people working than ever before in recent history, more kids in school," said Arif Lalani, Canada's ambassador in Afghanistan, who spoke from Kabul.

With a parliamentary debate looming over the future of the divisive mission, the federal government kicked up its public relations efforts yesterday with its first monthly briefing involving senior government officials active on the Afghan file.

Together, they painted a picture of a development strategy that is slowly rebuilding a country battered by years of conflict and touted statistics.

"Everything that we are doing here from the military and civilian side is to enable Afghans to help build governance and economic development," Lalani said.

"There's been tremendous progress ... much more needs to be done and I don't underestimate the challenges here."

But those upbeat reports of progress are tempered by news that Canadian troops are fighting – and dying – in an effort to regain territory west of Kandahar where they fought and died just a year ago.

Officials said yesterday that responsibility for securing the troubled Zhari and Panjawai districts will ultimately fall to the Afghan National Police, even as they admitted that the force, ill-equipped and plagued by corruption and poor supervision, is years away from being ready for the responsibility.

That's why Canada, already heavily involved in training the Afghan army, is stepping up its efforts to help train Afghan police officers. It is building a new Kandahar training facility where 200 police officers at a time will be able to learn advanced techniques, such as forensics and evidence handling.

As well, Canada has also agreed to deploy at least 22 police officers to help with a European Union initiative to train Afghan police in Kabul. That's on top of the 13 Canadian cops already in the country.

Afghanistan is certain to be on the agenda when Canada's top soldier, Gen. Rick Hillier, plays host to senior NATO leaders for meetings in Ottawa and Victoria, starting tomorrow. Expected at the meetings are Hillier's military counterparts from the 26 NATO nations as well as Gen. Ray Henault, a Canadian officer who serves as senior military adviser at NATO.

# Harper gambles on a relaunch

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**SECTION:** Editorial  
**PAGE:** AA06  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
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Can a new session of Parliament and a new throne speech help Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives finally connect with Canadians, after 19 months of lacklustre Tory minority rule? Harper obviously hopes so. Hence his decision yesterday to prorogue Parliament, and to relaunch his drifting government.

The Oct. 16 throne speech will give Harper a platform to put some fresh spin on his policies on Afghanistan, climate change, the economy and other issues that resonate with voters. The speech will likely also form the core of the Conservative election platform, if the opposition parties vote down his agenda.

Harper's gambit also offers Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, New Democrat Leader Jack Layton and Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe an opportunity to refocus their own programs, instead of reactively hammering the government. That isn't a bad thing.

During their 18 months in office, the Conservatives delivered on their unambitious election pledges of small tax cuts and giveaways, but drew much justified criticism for their handling of the Afghan file and the environment. Whole segments of the electorate, including women, francophones and urban voters never warmed to them. And while Harper yesterday praised himself for "strong leadership," he is also perceived as controlling, rigid and distant.

The Conservatives are mired at 36 per cent in the polls, barely ahead of the Liberals and no further head than on election night, Jan. 23, 2006. Harper's cabinet shuffle on Aug. 14 served to do little more than confirm that Afghanistan remains a major headache.

The throne speech affords Harper a chance to spell out precisely what he means when he talks about a "new mission" in Afghanistan, and forging "a degree of consensus" on a "new role" there. While most Canadians, including the opposition parties, would like to see our combat role in Kandahar end as scheduled in February 2009, or even earlier, Harper has been sketchy on what he has in mind. This weekend, Defence Minister Peter MacKay talked about the expiry of our "current configuration," without saying what comes next.

The Conservatives are out of step with the public on other key issues.

Harper's green plan ensures that Canada will remain a laggard in the battle against climate change because it imposes no hard caps on industrial emitters. By 2020, our emissions are likely to be higher than in 1990, instead of being deeply cut.

Also, the Tories have failed to heed the pleas of Canada's mayors to give cash—short cities including Toronto a penny of the six—cent goods and services tax, worth \$5 billion they desperately need.

In addition, Harper has emboldened Quebec separatists by affirming that Quebecers "form a nation," and by vowing to curb Ottawa's "outrageous" spending powers – powers that have given us medicare and the prospect of national child care and pharmacare.

And while 800,000 Canadian children live in poverty, he has refused to use the tax system to help the working poor sufficiently, or to raise the minimum wage or fund enough affordable housing or daycare.

If Harper fails to address these issues in the Speech from the Throne, and falls back on minor tax cuts and giveaways again, or on "tough on crime" measures that are more cosmetic than effective, the opposition parties would be justified in voting down his agenda, forcing an election and sparking debate on policies that better serve the nation.



# Military stands by its actions

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**PUBLICATION:** The Leader-Post (Regina)  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** C7  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Mike Blanchfield  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 464

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OTTAWA — The Canadian Forces are denying a published report suggesting they rejected a call for help by a remote Afghanistan police outpost that eventually lost 16 officers in a Taliban attack.

After Sunday's New York Times gave an account of the Aug. 7 incident, Kandahar's provincial police chief Syed Aqa Saqib paid a special visit to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, the Canadian commander in Afghanistan, because he "feels horribly" that the published report portrayed him as blaming Canadian troops for the deaths of 16 of his officers, said a senior military spokesman.

"The provincial police chief has already been in to see Gen. Laroche because he's obviously concerned about how the article portrayed his comments," Lt.-Col. Jamie Robertson, a senior Defence Department spokesman, said in an interview Tuesday.

"He went in to see him about it because it's not accurate at all."

Sahib said Canadian troops began withdrawing from police checkpoints in the Panjwaii district in early July, around the time of the rotation of Petawawa-based soldiers out of country for the incoming Royal 22nd Regiment, or Vandoo, from Valcartier, Que.

That sparked a series of Taliban attacks on the unprotected outposts, Sahib told the Times, including the Aug. 7 incident in which he reportedly called on Canadian troops for help.

Robertson disputed the published account and said that the besieged Afghan police originally called for assistance from Afghan National Army, which later called on Canadian troops to assist. The Canadians responded as quickly as possible but by the time they arrived the attack had ended, and they were in no position to help, he said.

The incident underscored the urgency to train and equip Afghan police and Canadian government officials announced Tuesday they planned to send more police officers and open a new training centre in Kandahar City.

As part of what was billed as a series of new and regular briefings on the mission in Afghanistan, government officials said 22 additional Canadian police officers would be joining a European Union training mission.

Canada will also be opening up its own police training centre in downtown Kandahar, next to where its provincial reconstruction team is located.

"We realize the formation of the Afghan National Police has lagged behind the formation of the Afghan National Army ... we're working very hard to help them meet that challenge," said a senior government official.

Tuesday's briefing was an attempt to promote "progress" on the ground in Afghanistan, but it was upended by some well-documented setbacks there, including the renewed Taliban presence in the Panjwahi after Canada claimed to have routed them last year.

Three major news organizations, including CanWest News Service, were also prevented from asking questions when a 20-minute press conference was abruptly halted with no explanation.

A report last week from the Brussels-based International Crisis Group on the state of policing in Afghanistan, lamented the high levels of corruption and poor training within the Afghan police, describing it as "a source of fear, rather than community protection."

# Harper moves close to election

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
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**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** C7  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 482

---

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Tuesday pushed the country a step closer to a possible 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech — followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009.

So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements Tuesday how the Liberals and NDP will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP have been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said Tuesday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

He also wants Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It will take all three opposition parties together to bring down the government. Recent opinion polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House Leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.

"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was, 'what can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

In a brief written statement Tuesday, Harper made no mention of Afghanistan. He said he was proroguing Parliament in order to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation," he said. "We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election."

Whether he intends to precipitate an election fought over Afghanistan — or whether he simply wants to relaunch his government with a new throne speech — Harper's decision to prorogue has other benefits for the Conservatives.

It frees up legions of federal Tories to help their provincial counterparts campaign in the upcoming Oct. 10 Ontario election.

It also means, says Dion, that Harper and his cabinet will endure one less month of questioning and scrutiny by opposition members in the House.

"It's unfortunate that Prime Minister Harper decided to prorogue the Parliament after failing to address issues such as climate change, Canada's mission in Afghanistan, or his record of broken promises on matters such as income trusts or equalization," said Dion, "(and) there are a number of important pieces of legislation that will be lost because of the prime minister's decision."

## PM's 'anti-democratic' war with media

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**PUBLICATION:** The Leader-Post (Regina)  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Viewpoints  
**PAGE:** B8  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Don Healy, The Leader-Post File Photo / Harper was happy to talk to reporters in Regina in 2005, before he became prime minister. ;  
**DATELINE:** VANCOUVER  
**BYLINE:** Barbara Yaffe  
**SOURCE:** The Vancouver Sun  
**WORD COUNT:** 642

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VANCOUVER -- I will be refusing, for some time to come, to interview Prime Minister Stephen Harper. This gesture isn't going to change the world. It's not meant to; it's aimed only at making a point -- the current government's media relations policy is anti-democratic.

It's paranoid and petty, too, but that's Harper's problem. He's free to determine his own communications strategy.

What's of concern is that the Conservatives' approach to the media has potential to be deleterious to the welfare of taxpayers. Because, for better or worse, it's primarily through media that ordinary people get information about government.

It's not news that this PM muzzles ministers and keeps an iron-clad grip on messaging.

It has been suggested that James Moore's perplexing inability to get into cabinet is traceable to his penchant for being chatty with media. Moore is the talented, bilingual MP for Port Moody-Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam.

That, again, is Harper's business. He's party leader and caucus boss. But where he goes too far is in restricting media operations.

This controversy, of course, first erupted in the spring of 2006. Little has been written on the topic since then because little has changed. Everyone, of necessity, has more or less accommodated the Harper rules. But that doesn't mean they're deserving of acceptance.

The rules: When Parliament is in session, journalists are limited to catching brief statements from Harper as he enters and leaves the Commons.

When news conferences are held, the Prime Minister's Office decides which reporters may ask a question. His staff choose questioners from a list. Clearly, reporters who have a history of asking tough or inconvenient questions might never be called upon.

PMO news releases regularly specify that media availability is for photographers only, so that a photo can be taken of this or that event but no questions may be asked.

No longer can ministers be questioned as they leave cabinet meetings because journalists are barred from gathering outside the cabinet room.

Last year, Harper attempted to interfere with the media's ability to report on the repatriation ceremonies of dead soldiers returning from Afghanistan. He was subsequently forced to reverse that position after a backlash from the soldiers' families. More recently, Harper had reporters barred from the lobby of Charlottetown's Delta Prince Edward Hotel, where Conservatives held a summer retreat. Journalists were directed to a government building across the road.

When Harper went on an Arctic tour a few weeks back, the PMO clashed with the Parliamentary Press Gallery about who could accompany him. Originally eight gallery members were to be allowed. When the gallery sent its list of journalists to the PMO, Harper's staff dropped the number to five, advising it wanted only one reporter and four technical people along. After much ado, two reporters were permitted: one English, one French.

So, what's behind Harper's communications credo?

Clearly, the PM stands to benefit from having his government stay on message and not be caught off guard, as it so often was in its Reform incarnation. Harper also is believed to want to reduce the importance of the institutional role played by the Ottawa press gallery. He's using the Internet, local press and friendly media in Calgary.

Many may consider this "inside baseball," of little import, but people should realize how important it is to know what's not on the government's official agenda as well as what's on it.

As a former press gallery member, I know journalists can learn lots through informal, impromptu exchanges with politicians. Thus, it's in the public interest for journalists to have broad access.

Not only is Harper's strategy anti-democratic, a poll this week reveals he's developing an image as "controlling." And his frosty rapport with reporters could backfire.

Peter Donolo was communications chief for Jean Chretien, who was a real bully, but never sought to manipulate the press to the degree Harper has.

"It's a bit like picking a fight with your mother-in-law," Donolo has warned. "It may feel great at the moment. But she's around for the long haul. She has a million ways of getting back at you, and making your life miserable. It's just not worth it."

– Yaffe writes for the Vancouver Sun.

# Extended vacation works up Tory foes

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**PUBLICATION:** The Winnipeg Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
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**ILLUSTRATION:** photo of STEPHEN HARPER Longer break  
**BYLINE:** KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU  
**WORD COUNT:** 187

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper has given MPs an extra month off work, despite howls of protest from opposition leaders eager to put the Conservatives on the hot seat over climate change and the war in Afghanistan.

Harper announced an official end to the session of Parliament, which means the House of Commons will stay silent until after a Speech from the Throne on Oct. 16. MPs were scheduled to be back at their desks on Sept. 17.

Harper called the first session of the 39th Parliament "exceptionally productive," but said it's time to launch the next phase of his minority government's agenda.

'MANDATE FOR CHANGE'

"Canadians gave us a mandate for change," he said in a release. "But we're just getting started. We will seize the opportunities that lie before us and rise to the challenges that confront us."

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion slammed the PM's move as an example of the government's lack of accountability.

"There are a number of important pieces of legislation that will be lost because of the prime minister's decision, including the Clean Air and Climate Change Act," he fumed.

NDP Leader Jack Layton accused Harper of wasting time by "locking out" MPs while students and employees across Canada have returned to work.

Government House Leader Peter Van Loan denied the move is designed to dodge the storm of controversy over Afghanistan.

"That's certainly not the motivation here," he said. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# Enemy underfoot Insurgents sly in hiding improvised explosive devices

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**SOURCETAG** 0709040365  
**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.04  
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**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** 16  
**BYLINE:** RICHARD LATENDRESSE  
**WORD COUNT:** 434

---

Canadian soldiers here in Afghanistan have to keep a sense of humour — even if it's a sick sense of humour.

I found that out on our latest patrol.

We were the closest we could get to sectors infested with the Taliban — between two forward operating bases, Ma'Sum Ghar and Sperwan Ghar, in southern Afghanistan.

All along the way, soldiers were on constant lookout. But not the arched-neck type of lookout, scouting around to see who might be creeping up behind them.

No, the soldiers aboard this light armoured vehicle weren't afraid of armed insurgents or a surprise attack. Their eyes were down.

At the tiniest of culverts along the dusty road, they carried out the same ritual again and again. Soldiers from the first LAV would disembark and meticulously check the ground, one step at a time, looking for clues — any indications of an IED, or an improvised explosive device.

Not an easy job. IEDs are made out of explosives and random pieces of household materials, or garbage. The clue could be a barely visible wire, or an old scrap of rubber. An innocuous remnant can serve as a detonator for these roadside bombs.

Watching the soldiers made me shudder. Wearing only a flak jacket and a helmet, they were hunting for home-made explosives in the bottom of a ditch.

## SLITHER

Others had to slither along the ground to find out what was under a blanket. It looked like it had been tossed there haphazardly. But there was no way of knowing for sure unless someone lifted it.

It should take about 20 minutes to travel this stretch of road, but it took us more than two hours. That's how long it takes to search out a sly killer.

But the troops don't always have the luxury of being fastidious. And for those times, they've come up with an expression: "Human cannonball.

As they go over a ditch they didn't have time to inspect, they squeeze their legs together and keep their bodies stiff.



The thinking is, if a bomb goes off under the vehicle, they'd fly into the air, becoming human cannonballs, and at least have a chance, albeit a slim chance, of surviving.

Just like the method itself, the humour is a form of self-preservation. It's fatalism based on grim reality.

So far, the IEDs have been the most effective weapon against the Canadians in Afghanistan. Over the past seven months, 22 of the 25 Canadians killed here were killed by explosions.

The bomb-makers are getting smarter and smarter. The Canadian military won't divulge details about what they know about the tactics, but they did show us examples of some IEDs.

A coffee pot was the trap. An old rubber tire was the detonator and a kitchen pot was brimming with explosives. Driving over the rubber to check out what the coffee pot was, there were enough explosives in that pot to rip a hole through a tank.

The task of outsmarting IEDs is never over.

#### MILITARY SECRETS

A small group of experts dismantles the ones that are unearthed.

They are well-trained, and well-equipped, and because they are so familiar with the enemies' tactics, they are now personal Taliban targets. Their identities remain military secrets.

As terrifying and deadly as the IEDs are, they are evidence of how the enemy can learn and adapt in its environment — and Canadian soldiers are doing the same.

The proof: Three out of four IEDs are successfully dismantled by Canadian troops.

Yet another imaginative countermeasure driven by self-preservation.

# 'Crimson Maple Leaf' misguided

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**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
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**BYLINE:** PETER WORTHINGTON  
**WORD COUNT:** 509

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The Canadian government is considering issuing a new medal for military personnel wounded by enemy action — our version of the U.S. Purple Heart, awarded to those who are wounded or killed by the enemy.

Several groups of veterans have been lobbying for this. A letter by Gordon O'Connor shortly before he was replaced as defence minister seems to confirm that a design is already being created.

If authorized, such a medal seems bound to provoke controversy. As well as being a sort of "monkey see, monkey do" copycat of the Purple Heart, it puts those wounded in Afghanistan on a pedestal higher than those wounded in the Second World War and Korea, where casualties were greater.

Presently, those wounded wear a embroidered gold wound stripe on the left sleeve of their uniform.

Terry Herrett, president of the Surrey, B.C. chapter of the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association (CPVA) submitted a proposed design for the wound medal to his MP, Mark Warawa, who forwarded it to then-defence minister O'Connor.

Herrett proposes calling the medal the "Purple Cross," with a purple ribbon flanked by white and red stripes, with the purple embossed on the cross.

O'Connor wrote to Herrett: "Creating a new medal is the right thing to do. You will be pleased to know that upon taking office I directed the Canadian Forces to begin working on the creation of a new medal to replace the Wound Stripe."

## PROPOSALS

DND and the Governor General's office are reviewing proposals.

O'Connor's successor in defence, Peter MacKay, is unlikely to second-guess his predecessor on this issue, since O'Connor is a retired brigadier-general.

Murray Sinnot, an ex-soldier and retired Windsor, Ont., police officer has lobbied veterans groups, MPs and even Don Cherry about the wound medal, which he suggests could be called the "Crimson Maple Leaf."

While there's wide support to honour those killed or wounded in Afghanistan (Herrett proposes that those killed in action get the new medal posthumously), veterans of WWII and Korea were often bemused at the American custom of awarding a medal to those wounded.

Canadian soldiers used to feel it was better not to be wounded.

Ray Kekkonen, vice-president of the CPVA, says his organization has made no official decision about the wound medal, and that Herrett's design "is purely personal." The Royal Canadian Legion is also noncommittal. Vince Courtenay, a Korean veteran and publisher of Koreavetnews.com has "no argument with the concept" but dislikes calling it the copycat "Purple Cross," and prefers the medal not to be in the form of a cross, "which usually denotes valour."

Cliff Chadderton, chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations (56 member organizations) who lost a leg in WWII while an officer with the Winnipeg Rifles in Holland, thinks awarding a medal for getting wounded "is heading in the wrong direction."

#### SLIGHTED

To award a medal to the wounded of Afghanistan could be interpreted as a slight to those thousands who were casualties in WWII, Korea and on UN peacekeeping missions. Such a medal would almost have to be awarded retrospectively to the wounded of past wars — a huge bureaucratic nightmare. And, again, imitating the Americans.

Canada already dishes out more service medals than in WWI, WWII and Korea combined. Our soldiers have always tried not to get wounded, and kept casualties low. If a medal is authorized for being wounded, that tradition may be about to end, with some individuals seeking light wounds in order to get a medal.

# Suicide extremely rare in Canadian military

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**SOURCETAG:** 0709041498  
**PUBLICATION:** The Edmonton Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.04  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 6  
**ILLUSTRATION:** file photo by AP Suicide rates among Canadian soldiers are lower than their U.S. counterparts.  
**BYLINE:** ANDREW HANON, SUN MEDIA  
**WORD COUNT:** 519

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As the family of Hamilton–born Maj. Raymond Ruckpaul waits in an agony of doubt to find out what happened to him, one thing is certain: suicide in the Canadian military is extremely rare.

Ruckpaul, a 42–year–old married father of two, became the 70th Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan since 2002 after he was found in his barracks with a gunshot wound on Aug. 29. He died about an hour after being discovered.

## MILITARY TIGHT–LIPPED

Military brass right up to Defence Minister Peter MacKay have been resolutely tight–lipped about the circumstances surrounding his death, saying only that there was no enemy involvement, fuelling speculation about suicide and murder.

An autopsy will be performed in Toronto today, but Ruckpaul's cousin Leona said, "it will be a very long time before we really know the truth."

The incident comes on the heels of a U.S. military report that suggests the stress from long tours of fighting a shadowy enemy in Afghanistan and Iraq have led to one of the highest suicide rates among American military personnel in nearly three decades.

But Canada's military is not on the same trajectory, with suicide rates remaining constant – and much lower than their American counterparts, say Canadian officials.

In 2006, the report says 99 U.S. soldiers died by their own hands, for a rate of 17.3 per 100,000.

While last year's figures weren't available, the average number of suicides in the Canadian military from 2000 to 2005 was 9.8 per year, with rates hovering in the 11 to 13 per 100,000 range.

"I've never known anyone in the military who's committed suicide," said a veteran Edmonton–based soldier, who spoke on condition of anonymity. (The Canadian military) goes to great pains to see that we're taken care of."

In fact, said Lt.–Col. Theresa Girvin, a psychiatrist at the Edmonton Garrison, the suicide rate among Canadian Forces personnel is actually lower than the civilian population, which according to the Canadian Mental Health Association's website is 15 per 100,000.

## SAFETY NETS

She said this is likely because of the intricate system of safety nets the military has established in the past decade to ensure troops stay as mentally and emotionally sharp as possible.

All Canadian officers must take suicide-awareness training so they can spot the warning signs of emotional problems in the troops under their command, she explained. There is also an informal "buddy system" in place, where soldiers are paired up to watch out for each other.

Girvin added that the military culture has evolved to "allow soldiers to come forward and be more expressive about their emotions and to get the help they need."

Retired Maj.-General Lewis MacKenzie said Canadian Forces brass have learned a lot since he served in the Balkans in the 1990s.

One of the keys, he said, is keeping soldiers together with their in-theatre buddies, even after their tour of duty is up. The old system of "plug and play" brought small units of soldiers together for combat, and then sent them home when it was over, he explained.

And if a reservist came from "Upper Armpit, Sask," he'd go home and likely be alone with his memories, with no one who could truly understand what he'd been through, he said.

Before soldiers return from an Afghan tour, they spend five days with their buddies in a resort-like atmosphere in Cyprus. There, they stay among soldiers who've been through the same things and decompress together from the stress of combat.

"The best thing for a soldier who's suffering is another soldier he served with," he said.

But sometimes, it still isn't enough, Girvin acknowledged. "Some guys will have a heck of a time coming forward (for help), anyway." KEYWORDS=CANADA

# Taliban kidnapper killed

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**SOURCETAG** 0709050707  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 16  
**BYLINE:** AP  
**DATELINE:** KABUL, Afghanistan  
**WORD COUNT:** 740

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Afghan forces said yesterday that they killed a Taliban commander behind the kidnapping of South Korean church workers, less than a week after the hostages were let go under a deal seen as a propaganda coup for the hardline Islamic militia.

A Taliban spokesman denied any of its commanders was killed, and accused the government of exaggerating the group's battlefield losses. Afghan and U.S.-led coalition forces said at least 39 suspected insurgents had been killed in several clashes since Monday.

The Taliban commander, Mullah Mateen, was killed along with 16 other militants in fighting late Monday and early yesterday in the central province of Ghazni, where the insurgents seized 23 South Koreans on July 19, said Ghazni Deputy Gov. Kazim Allayar and a senior police officer.

Ghazni has seen several military operations since the captives' release Aug. 29 and Aug. 30, possibly reflecting a desire by the Afghan government to assert its authority on the rebellious region following the abductions. Allayar said Mateen played a key role in the kidnapping, including telephone negotiations with the government in the early days of the crisis.

In the past, Afghan authorities have often made claims to have killed local Taliban commanders that turned out to be wrong. At the same time, Taliban spokesman have played down or lied about their battlefield losses.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said seven insurgents were killed in the overnight clash, and described all of them as ordinary fighters. He said the Taliban did not have a commander called Mullah Mateen.

In the past, Afghan authorities have often made claims to have killed local Taliban commanders that turned out to be wrong. At the same time, Taliban spokesman have played down or lied about their battlefield losses.

Two of the Korean hostages were slain soon after the kidnapping. Two women were released later during the Taliban's negotiations with South Korea, and the remaining 19 were freed after Seoul repeated a long-standing commitment to withdraw its 200 soldiers here by year's end and prevent Christian missionaries from travelling to Afghanistan.

The two women freed Aug. 13 spoke about their captivity during a news conference Tuesday, appearing in hospital gowns at a news conference held at a hospital south of Seoul where the 21 survivors are receiving medical treatment.

One of the women, Kim Kyung-ja, mentioned how some Taliban fighters, wearing masks, carried

machine-guns and a video camera. "I'm still scared of cameras," she told the crowd of journalists, which included many still and television photographers.

The session ended abruptly when a pale-looking Kim suddenly called for a doctor.

Earlier, she and her companion, Kim Gina, told of their fear during their 26 days in captivity. "We thought we might be killed when we were moved to another location at night," Kim Gina said.

The hostages have said they were separated into small groups, and Kim Gina said her group, which included Kim Kyung-ja, was moved 15 to 16 times before the two were freed.

She said that group also included 29-year-old Shim Sung-min, one of the two men slain by the insurgents.

"Sung-Min said, 'Don't worry, it will be OK,'" Kim recalled. "He put us at ease."

She said the Taliban called Shim away on July 31, then told the other hostages he had been sent home. She said she did not learn he had been killed until her release.

Though the Taliban threatened the hostages with guns, some were kind, Kim said. "When we met good Taliban we tried to talk to them," she said.

Asked about reports some male hostages were beaten for refusing to recite Muslim prayers, Kim said she had not heard anything like that.

While the Taliban apparently did not extract any new concessions from South Korea, the negotiations with government representatives bolstered the insurgents' legitimacy at a time of surging violence in Afghanistan, analysts have said.

On Tuesday, Taliban insurgents armed with machine-guns and rocket-propelled grenades attacked an observation post close to a large U.S.-led coalition base in central Afghanistan, the coalition said in a statement.

Afghan and coalition soldiers killed 10 suspected insurgents, including a district "sub-commander," during the fight, the coalition said, giving no more details.

On Monday, a joint U.S.-led coalition patrol came under suspected Taliban attack in southern Kandahar province, a separate statement said. Aircraft were summoned to bomb the Taliban positions, killing "over one dozen" of the attackers, the statement said.

It was not possible to confirm casualty figures because travel to the areas where the fighting was reported is extremely dangerous.

Afghan officials said two suicide bombers killed three Afghan police officers and wounded seven in an attack Tuesday in the town of Kunduz in northern Afghanistan and another Monday in Paktika province, a militant hotspot that borders Pakistan.

The Taliban ruled much of Afghanistan from the mid-1990s until late 2001, imposing an extreme version of Islam and harbouring al-Qaida leaders and thousands of other Muslim militants from around the world.

They were ousted by a U.S.-led coalition following the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, but are leading an increasingly bloody insurgency. More than 4,200 people, most of them militants, have been killed this year, according to an Associated Press count. KEYWORDS=WORLD

# Investigation clears top military cop

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**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 16  
**BYLINE:** CP  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**WORD COUNT:** 558

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Canada's top military cop was cleared yesterday of potential criminal wrongdoing in the ongoing legal controversy involving Afghan detainees.

The Canadian army says there's no evidence to support a prosecution of naval Capt. Steve Moore, the provost marshal.

The conclusion was reached following an investigation by two senior RCMP officers, who'd been called in by the military after allegations of abuse of Taliban prisoners surfaced last winter.

A spokeswoman for the National Investigative Service — a branch of the Canadian Forces — characterized the investigation, which to this point had remained a secret, as procedural.

"The provost marshal himself is in the direct chain of command and the allegations had a potential criminal angle," said Capt. Cindi Tessier.

The decision to conclude the investigation comes as human rights lawyers are set to appear in court today for another round in the legal battle over detainees. Concern that prisoners captured by Canadians and handed over to Afghan authorities faced possible abuse and even torture, has spawned a dizzying array of investigations and court actions.

Tessier said that a separate national investigative probe is still underway into whether individual military police officers in Afghanistan could be held accountable if abuse has taken place. To date, Canadian authorities in Kandahar have received six complaints from Afghans who say they were abused after being handed over to local authorities.

Amnesty International Canada and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association complained last February to the Military Police Complaints Commission, accusing military cops of exhibiting "a wilful blindness to the consequences of transferring detainees and that they may have aided or abetted the torture of detainees."

The agency is still investigating that accusation, said Stan Blythe, chief of staff to the commissioner.

"We were aware the (military) police were looking at the possible criminal side of this and have received a copy of their investigation," he said.

"We're aware of it and will make use of the information they've discovered, but it doesn't close the investigation for us."



To date, Canadian authorities in Kandahar have received six complaints from Afghans who say they were abused after being handed over to local authorities.

Amir Attaran, the University of Ottawa law professor who's been pushing the issue of detainee rights, was mystified at how RCMP investigators could clear the provost marshal when Defence Minister Peter MacKay acknowledged the alleged cases of abuse last spring, when he was foreign affairs minister.

"Peter MacKay has said Canadian investigators have heard, quote, serious allegations of torture; he called them serious, that was his word," said Attaran.

"How can he call them serious when his own staff now says there's no evidence?"

Both Amnesty and the civil liberties association have launched a court challenge, trying to stop the transfer of prisoners to Afghan jails, but that action has been bogged down in a quagmire of legal wrangling.

The case had been set to go before a Federal Court judge last spring, when the Conservative government announced it had reached a new understanding with the Afghans, giving Canadian authorities better access to detainees. The challenge was put on hold until the human rights groups could review the deal.

A further snag developed in early July when officials at National Defence denied an application for documents filed by Amnesty lawyers.

The records were deemed too sensitive to be released and when human rights lawyers challenged it, the government invoked an unusual section of the Canada Evidence Act, which dropped a cloak of secrecy around the entire challenge.

Paul Champ, a lawyer for Amnesty, said in addition to fighting for the Afghan documents, his group has launched a charter challenge, hoping to quash the government's power to force secret hearings on court applications.

"The government secrecy privilege is an exceptional power that should only be used sparingly in a democracy," he said.

"Holding hearings in secret doesn't allow for oversight by the justice system, the media and the public."

The Canadian Association of Journalists has signalled its intention to intervene in the charter case, supporting Amnesty's application as it relates to the Evidence Act. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

# PM puts foes on the hotseat

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**SOURCETAG** 0709050703  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** 15  
**BYLINE:** ROY CLANCY  
**WORD COUNT:** 436

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A cutesy segment on CBC Radio yesterday morning featured the leaders of Canada's national parties telling us what they did during their summer vacation.

After being treated to Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe talking about fishing and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May waxing poetic about reading Harry Potter, the CBC made a point of scolding PM Stephen Harper for not sharing tales of his summer vacation.

They didn't come right out and say so, but you could tell they were suggesting Harper wasn't being a good sport — that his refusal to join in this little bit of post-summer fun reinforced his image as a bit of a cold fish.

Later in the day, Canadians everywhere found out what Harper had been doing with his summer and it rattled new wires across the country.

The current session of Parliament was supposed to reconvene this month, but instead, Harper prorogued or terminated it and will begin a new session Oct. 16 with revised priorities outlined in a Throne Speech.

If the opposition parties don't like the policies in the Throne Speech and vote against it, they will trigger a snap election.

While other party leaders were fishing, cottaging and reading novels, Harper was busy planning political strategy.

**HARDLY SURPRISING.**

During his stint as prime minister of a minority government, Harper has revealed his brilliance as a strategist — outflanking his opponents on several occasions.

No doubt he gets as much pleasure from it as Duceppe does in hooking a big pike.

Harper's post-Labour Day bombshell drew an immediate hail of bullets from opposition politicians.

"By locking MPs out, Stephen Harper is showing utter disregard for the work that has already been done," said NDP Leader Jack Layton. Ending the session early would kill legislation still on the order paper.

"Suspending Parliament is a sign the government is running out of ideas," said Duceppe.

Au contraire to the Bloc leader's admonishments, this move allows Harper to put fresh ideas on the table designed to entice Canadian voters to hand him the prize he's been seeking — a majority government.

As the Conservatives pointed out yesterday, the Liberals aren't in a position to criticize. They prorogued Parliament four times during the Chretien years, with several bills dying over and over again.

This manoeuvre offers several advantages to the Conservatives.

Harper's first Throne Speech in April last year contained a decisive plan designed for quick execution in the event the opposition forced an election.

Lately the Tories have languished in the polls, appearing to twiddle their thumbs while enduring sniping on issues such as global warming and Afghanistan.

The Throne Speech will "launch the next phase of our mandate," Harper said yesterday.

It will also force his foes to put up or shut up on the hot-button issues -- a prospect they likely won't relish.

There's some evidence that the more Canadians learn about the true nature of the Afghanistan mission, the more they support it.

And it is hard to imagine voters will have the stomach to support Dion's insistence Canada blindly adhere to Kyoto targets when they discover the scorched-earth effect it could have on our economy.

Harper's essentially daring the opposition parties, currently in some disarray, to force an election.

If they do, it will be a busy fall.

Calgary voters go to the polls in the municipal election Oct. 15 and could face another trip to the voting booth this fall if a federal election is called.

This might persuade Premier Ed Stelmach, who's been mulling over the timing of a provincial election, to wait until spring to seek a mandate from voters.

At least, we can only hope it will.

# Injured soldier shares story Lost both legs in Afghanistan

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**SOURCETAG:** 0709050680  
**PUBLICATION:** The Calgary Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** 4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** photo of PAUL FRANKLIN Tells his story  
**BYLINE:** PABLO FERNANDEZ, SUN MEDIA  
**WORD COUNT:** 200

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Standing on two prosthetic legs — the result of a bomb attack that almost claimed his life — Master Cpl. Paul Franklin is certain Canada's work in Afghanistan is worth the price.

Franklin, who lost both legs in the explosion that killed Canadian diplomat Glyn Berry, is a military medic who now travels the country telling the Canadian soldiers' story through his own experience.

With the aid of a slide presentation, Franklin spoke of his two tours in Afghanistan and how he became a double amputee to a Chinook Rotary Club luncheon yesterday.

Never letting his smile drop or his sense of humour fade, the wise-cracking soldier, who was born in Halifax and raised in Calgary, is blunt about how quickly and violently his life changed on Jan. 15, 2006.

"This is the last day I raised my legs," said Franklin, describing the blast that destroyed his light-armoured vehicle and how he had to will himself to live as he squeezed his legs tight to keep from bleeding to death.

The next slide showed the devastation that tore through his vehicles, himself and his mates.

"My job was to protect Glyn Berry and this is how that worked out."

Franklin's last tour was served with the Army's Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The war has claimed friends and nearly cost him his life, but Franklin said he'd do it all again.

"This is not a Liberal mission, it's not a Conservative mission, it's not even a Canadian mission. It is a UN-mandated, NATO-led mission ... and it is a just fight." **KEYWORDS=ALBERTA**

# Afghans say Taliban hostage-taker killed

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050028  
**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Early  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A9  
**COLUMN:** World Briefing  
**DATELINE:** KABUL, Afghanistan  
**SOURCE:** Reuters  
**WORD COUNT:** 117

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KABUL, Afghanistan – A senior Taliban commander involved in the abduction of 23 South Korean missionaries was among dozens of insurgents killed in clashes in southern Afghanistan overnight, police said yesterday.

Ali Shah Ahmadzai, police chief of Ghazni province, said Taliban commander Mullah Mateen was among 22 insurgents killed in a clash in the province's Qarabagh district.

However the U.S. military said it was not yet clear whether any hostage-takers were among "several" insurgents killed in Qarabagh. It said a dozen militants had been killed in a separate battle in the southern province of Kandahar overnight, while officials said three policemen had been killed in two separate suicide blasts in the south yesterday.

# Canadian military lacks facts, report says; Armed Forces fall short on intelligence capability

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050016  
**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A6  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 436

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OTTAWA — The military command in charge of running the Afghanistan mission and all other overseas troop deployments is having difficulty providing the needed intelligence to support such operations, warns a Canadian Forces report obtained by the Ottawa Citizen.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force Command "clearly suffers from a lack of intelligence capability," concludes the report prepared in January for the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Rick Hillier.

The report, compiled by two generals and an admiral, was prepared for the Harper government earlier this year but never released publicly.

It provides a status check on the military's transformation into an efficient and relevant organization for the future. Part of that change, announced 18 months ago, included the creation of four new commands, including the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, which oversees the Afghanistan mission and international operations.

But the report warns that the command does not have the resources to complete the intelligence preparation fundamental to the planning of an operation. It also lacks an around-the-clock intelligence capability in Ottawa.

"In conflicts such as Afghanistan, which are widely characterized as intelligence-driven and further described as the wars of company and platoon commanders, the provision of timely and actionable tactical intelligence must be viewed as an urgent and no-fail requirement," according to the document. "Issues related to the provision of timely and actionable intelligence to CEFCOM, and by extension, to deployed forces, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."

The senior officers recommend that a common operations centre for three of the new commands be created to ensure more effective and efficient delivery of intelligence to those in the field.

The report also notes that another office, the Chief of Defence Intelligence or CDI, has been providing good support to various organizations in the military and that should improve in the future as more analysts are hired.

But it also warns that the "CDI cannot support two lines of operations with currently available assets; therefore, it is unable to meet the intelligence capability expectations of the government."

The report recommends the consolidation of the CDI's offices into one facility, and also the creation of what is called a fusion capability and intelligence enhancement.

Hillier has been pushing for that capability, which is expected to end up as part of a new command centre in Ottawa that will marshal intelligence data from combat zones and from across the country.

The \$64-million program to build the joint information and intelligence fusion capability would bring together large amounts of information, including video imagery, still photographs, map displays and other data as it is transmitted from various sources. In some cases, officers would be able to watch live imagery from unmanned aerial drones in Afghanistan.

# PM raises political stakes with planned new session; Move dares opposition to topple government

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050012  
**PUBLICATION:** Times Colonist (Victoria)  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A4  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Peter Van Loan: Tories ready for an election;  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 561

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OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper yesterday pushed the country a step closer to a possible 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech — followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009.

So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian Forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements yesterday how the Liberals and NDP will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP have been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said yesterday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

He also wants Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It will take all three opposition parties together to bring down the government. Recent opinion polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.



"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was, 'what can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

In a brief written statement yesterday, Harper made no mention of Afghanistan. He said he was proroguing Parliament in order to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation," he said. "We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election."

Whether he intends to precipitate an election fought over Afghanistan — or whether he simply wants to relaunch his government with a new throne speech — Harper's decision to prorogue has other benefits for the Conservatives.

It frees up legions of federal Tories to help their provincial counterparts campaign in the upcoming Oct. 10 Ontario election.

It also means, says Dion, that Harper and his cabinet will endure one less month of questioning and scrutiny by opposition members in the House.

"It's unfortunate that Prime Minister Harper decided to prorogue the Parliament after failing to address issues such as climate change, Canada's mission in Afghanistan, or his record of broken promises on matters such as income trusts or equalization," said Dion, "[and] there are a number of important pieces of legislation that will be lost because of the prime minister's decision."

Among the pending legislation that will now die on the order paper, the most politically charged is Bill C-30, the government's climate-change law, which the Conservatives had been backing away from ever since a parliamentary committee tried in the spring to give it more teeth by including tougher regulations for industry.

But the Conservatives will also lose several bills they were still championing, including a number of Criminal Code amendments, one of which would have raised the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14.

# Tchaikovsky a casualty of conflict in Afghanistan; Fewer cannons available for big finale to Symphony Under the Sky

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050053

**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** Cityplus

**PAGE:** B2

**COLUMN:** Nick Lees

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: John Lucas, The Journal / ESO staff, from left, ErikaRatzlaff, Melayne Shankel, Jenna Schwanak and Christy Holtby cover their ears Monday as cannon fire punctuates the 1812 Overture, bringing this year's Symphony Under the Sky to its coda at Hawrelak Park. ;

**KEYWORDS:** 0

**BYLINE:** Nick Lees

**SOURCE:** The Edmonton Journal

**WORD COUNT:** 599

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There must be some mistake, I thought Sunday, when at the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's Symphony Under the Sky I was handed earplugs.

I've heard the symphony play a few times last season and thought they were pretty decent.

"You dummy," said ESO events manager Melayne Shankel. "The earplugs are for protection during the cannon fire in Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture."

The 20th Field Regiment was to fire three 105mm pieces of artillery at Hawrelak Park during the climax of the overture and anyone nearby was handed earplugs.

I'd wanted to chat to the soldiers, Edmonton and Red Deer reservists, and was told the "cannons" were loud.

So loud, an ESO type wearing headphones came running behind the stage yelling: "Open all the RV windows."

It was announced before conductor Bob Bernhardt led the musicians into battle that the regiment's commanding officer, Lt.-Col. Gerald Johnson, had recently returned from Afghanistan and was retiring after 37 years of service.

Some 2,500 proud Canadians gave him a standing ovation.

The overture's conclusion requires rapid fire. But gun crews couldn't keep up when the ESO's Darren Salyn cued them in. A few blasts were missed.

"There was a time when we had six cannons," said Shankel. "But when Canada is helping fight a war, we are grateful for any support."

Tchaikovsky a casualty of conflict in Afghanistan; Fewer cannons available for big finale to Symphony Under the Sky

## CONCERT HIGH NOTES

- Warmly received was Claude Lapalme's majestic arrangement of Ian Tyson's Four Strong Winds.
- Equally recognized was Chao Wang for his City of Ashes, which won him the Telus Young Composer's Project.

Wang, who played violin in the Edmonton Youth Orchestra while attending Harry Ainlay school, begins studies this month in the U of A's computing sciences department.

Chao describes his work, in part: "A battle rages upon a city, demolishing the people, culture and very life that the city held. The few survivors strive to rebuild, hoping to capture a glimpse of home. But before they can succeed, the war returns and destroys their last hopes."

Brilliant Chao. But loosen up pal. The Oilers are looking at a great season.

- Winnipeg pianist Scott Meek, a doctoral student at Indiana University who tinkled the ivories with a little Mozart and Tchaikovsky, told me he loves to drive to and fro across the river valley. "We don't have hills in Winnipeg," says Meek, motivated to become a pianist at the age of 10, when he heard his teacher play.
- Trumpet player Bill Dimmer had just lifted off from City Centre Airport last week when oil suddenly covered his windshield. "I requested permission to land immediately," he says. "An oil seal in the propeller had blown." Thank goodness it wasn't anything serious.

## WOMEN OF VALOUR HONOURED

Needy women and children are helped with funding on Sunday, Sept. 9, when Na'amat Canada and Emunah Canada combine to honour six local women at a Women of Valour Gala.

The recipients are: Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach's wife, Marie Stelmach; Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel's wife, Lynn Mandel; former deputy prime minister Anne McLellan; University of Alberta president Indira Samarasekera; matriarch Mirian Ghermezian and Shoshana Pollack, a life member of both organizing groups.

Benefiting locally at the Fantasyland Hotel event will be Edmonton women's shelters and School Supplies for Kids.

The gala will also support the Na'amat Canada Glickman Centre for Family Violence Prevention in Tel Aviv and the Emunah's Neve Michael Children's Village in Pardes-Hanna, halfway between Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Tickets: \$180. Call: 481-5986.

## IT'S ALL A QUESTION OF FARMS

There was a call from Norway hours after I threw a column into the newsroom bucket last week about Edmontonian medivac pilot Mark Fremmerlid saying he believes he could be related to Albert (Mad Trapper) Johnson.

The news wire moves quickly and my yarn about Fremmerlid's suggestion that the Mad Trapper could have been his mother's brother was big in Norway.

After carefully reading What Became Of Sigvald, Anyway? I determined the man must have used his father's last name and was Sigvald Velsvik.

Tchaikovsky a casualty of conflict in Afghanistan; Fewer cannons available for big finale to Symph70y Unde

Not so, I'm told. Norwegians take their last names from the farm they work on and the Mad Trapper could have been Sigvald Pederson Haaskjold.

Albert Johnson, according to Fremmerlid, of Norwegian descent, could have been from the Haaskjold farm and his dad was from the Velsvik farm.

If you want to know more, go to [www.wassigvaldthetrapper.com](http://www.wassigvaldthetrapper.com). Type in the address. Google won't find it.

[nlees@thejournal.canwest.com](mailto:nlees@thejournal.canwest.com)

# Why not prorogue?

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**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
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**SECTION:** Opinion  
**PAGE:** A14  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICS; PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES  
**SOURCE:** The Edmonton Journal  
**WORD COUNT:** 528

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For a government eager to demonstrate that it's in step with the country, the day the rest of the country went back to class was a strange one to declare "School's Out" on Parliament Hill. Still, an agenda in keeping with the week's educational theme can be discerned.

At a result of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament and prepare the way for a new Throne Speech on Oct. 16, Canadians will learn what their government plans for the second half of its mandate, perhaps in a refashioned environmental policy and in an Afghanistan mission now evolving toward withdrawal in 2009.

We will learn, secondly, whether there will be an election this fall. Opposition parties will have an opportunity to force one in the confidence vote that accompanies the opening of a new session of Parliament, and the fact that there's no particular stomach for an election either among the political parties or the electorate doesn't mean it won't happen.

And in the process of all this politicking, maybe we'll learn what this word "prorogue" means, anyway.

The less generously inclined among us may notice the syllable "rogue," and joke about Ottawa becoming more open to charlatans.

In fact, however, the word is derived from the Old French "proroguer," the Middle English "prorogen" (and Latin before that). To prorogue can mean "to defer" as well as "to adjourn." In Canada, a prorogation has come to indicate the period between two sessions of a legislative body. In effect, the parliament is in recess until the Governor General opens a new session on behalf of the reigning monarch and reads the Speech from the Throne.

The word has been prominent in history, although not always in stories whose endings our prime minister would particularly like.

In Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* — an altogether extended, confusing story of a man who loses everything — prorogue is employed by the Bard in an exchange between Helicanus and Lysimachus. The only sustenance Pericles had had lately, according to his pal Helicanus, was "but to prorogue his grief."

And in the early years of his reign, King Charles I of England issued prorogation orders in his battle with a Parliament reluctant to grant his demands for new revenue. At one point, he advised them to "Remember that parliaments are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting, and dissolution; therefore as I find the fruits of them good or evil, they are to continue or not to be."

With all respect to opposition leaders and their anti-government rhetoric, however, Harper's decision to end the current session is neither a bad nor irresponsible one. Why shouldn't the no-longer-so-new government begin the second part of its mandate by detailing new plans to Canadians in a forum likely to get more thorough, thoughtful attention than would be the case if the current session merely continued?

It's true, Charles I's handling of Parliament ended very unhappily for him (on a scaffold, in fact). But it's hard to imagine that will be the figurative fate of the Conservative government this fall, when few Canadians want an election, and all federal party leaders are clearly equally worried about their futures.

# Forces deny failing to help allies

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**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A5  
**COLUMN:** Canada Digest  
**KEYWORDS:** !@DATELINE=OTTAWA  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 98

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OTTAWA -- The Canadian Forces are denying a published report suggesting they rejected a call for help by a remote Afghanistan police outpost that eventually lost 16 officers in a Taliban attack.

After Sunday's New York Times gave an account of the Aug. 7 incident, Kandahar's provincial police chief Syed Aqa Saqib paid a special visit to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, the Canadian commander in Afghanistan, because he "feels horribly" that the published report portrayed him as blaming Canadian troops for the deaths of 16 of his officers, said a senior military spokesman.

# Harper opts for new session of parliament; Oct. throne speech will require vote of confidence

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**PUBLICATION:** Edmonton Journal  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A5  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
**SOURCE:** Ottawa Citizen; CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 468

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OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Tuesday pushed the country a step closer to a possible 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech — followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009.

So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements Tuesday how the Liberals and NDP will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP have been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said Tuesday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

He also wants Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It will take all three opposition parties together to bring down the government. Recent opinion polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House Leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.



"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was, 'what can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

In a brief written statement Tuesday, Harper made no mention of Afghanistan. He said he was proroguing Parliament in order to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation," he said. "We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election."

Whether he intends to precipitate an election fought over Afghanistan — or whether he simply wants to relaunch his government with a new throne speech — Harper's decision to prorogue has other benefits for the Conservatives.

It frees up legions of federal Tories to help their provincial counterparts campaign in the upcoming Oct. 10 Ontario election.

It also means, says Dion, that Harper and his cabinet will endure one less month of questioning and scrutiny by opposition members in the House.

Among the pending legislation that will now die on the order paper, the most politically charged is Bill C-30, the government's climate-change law, which the Conservatives had been backing away from ever since a parliamentary committee tried in the spring to give it more teeth by including tougher regulations for industry.

# Taliban hostage taker among dead insurgents

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A4  
**COLUMN:** World Digest  
**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM  
**DATELINE:** KABUL  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 57

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KABUL — A senior Taliban commander involved in the abduction of 23 South Korean missionaries was among dozens of insurgents killed in clashes in southern Afghanistan, police said Tuesday.

Ali Shah Ahmadzai, police chief of Ghazni province, said Taliban commander Mullah Mateen was among 22 insurgents killed in a clash in the province's Qarabagh district.

# THE AFGHAN MISSION The stink of our failure

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL  
**IDN:** 072480207  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**PAGE:** A1  
**BYLINE:** CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD  
**SECTION:** Column  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:** KANADAHAR, AFGHANISTAN  
**WORDS:** 1202  
**WORD COUNT:** 1133

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CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD KANADAHAR, AFGHANISTAN I left Kandahar yesterday for the fourth time in 18 months. For the first time, I left filled with shame.

On the micro level, it was because a story that unfolded before a trusty colleague of mine, Steve Chao of CTV, was fresh in my mind.

Mr. Chao was at Patrol Base Wilson, a Canadian base in the Taliban heartland of Zhari district, last weekend, and was interviewing a local Afghan National Police chief when, off in the distance, came the telltale smoke of a roadside bomb.

A U.S. private security truck escorting a tanker had been blown up, and its men and the ANP travelling with them were now under fire. The police chief, Colonel Gulam Rasool Aka, impeccably starched and dressed and to all appearances a good policeman (there are more of these than you would think), was on the phone to his guys taking fire. As Mr. Chao watched, a Canadian came out of a command post to ask what was going on. Col. Aka told him and asked if the Canadians could help; the man said, "Keep me informed," and disappeared back into the CP.

For all the problems that bedevil the ANP, and they are legion, not being able to rely on their Canadian allies traditionally has not been one of them.

Now, on this day at least it was, and though there may be good reason why and there's no doubt the Canadians cannot ride to the rescue of the alternately beleaguered and inept ANP every time, it still grated because I remember a time, last year, when Canadians were everyone's go-to boys.

But in a broader way, I left with the stink of failure in my nose.

The Canadian mission in Afghanistan is not failing, though its progress is measured some days in millimetres (my late father had a far better term for such a fine unit) and it is far from perfect.

Like those of the other donor nations whose dollars flood this place, Canada's effort in this country has suffered from a surfeit of good will and a lack of hard-nosed resolve to make funds contingent upon action on the internal corruption that is rife in Afghanistan and the fledgling government of President Hamid Karzai.

Rather, what stuck in my nostrils was a failure of nerve: Canada, I fear, has lost its collective stomach for this exercise. It's too tough, too hard, too damn slow, and the cost – 70 lives down and, as an Ottawa-dated story I read yesterday jauntily noted, "and counting" – is too great.

The signs are everywhere.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has pledged to quickly bring a motion to the House of Commons formally setting February, 2009, as the day Canada's combat role will end here. The NDP's Jack Layton is still demanding Canadian troops withdraw now, and has added the twist that Canada should take the lead in "peace talks" here.

Since the only group at war with Canada in Afghanistan is the Taliban and the warlords and narco-criminals who are their allies of convenience, I guess Mr. Layton means peace talks with them.

Presumably, as the pundits are saying, Mr. Layton considers the Taliban's recent negotiations with South Korea – why, only two of those foolish but innocent hostages were murdered after all – is evidence of their new respectability.

And more tellingly, those in Ottawa skilled at reading the tea leaves of the Stephen Harper government suggest that the Conservatives have lost their appetite for this particular battle.

I hope they are wrong, but in light of what new Defence Minister Peter MacKay was last weekend telling CTV's Question Period, it's hard to remain optimistic. Mr. MacKay said that Canada's NATO allies have been reminded they "cannot count on our troops" after February of 2009, though he was quick to reassure Canadians that "the aid work and the diplomatic effort and presence will extend well beyond that." Well, that is just a glorious crock.

The critics of this mission like to say there has never been an honest debate about it in Parliament, the suggestion that if only there had been, fighting troops would never have been sent here because the Canadian people always prefer to see their soldiers in peaceable roles. That may or may not be true, but that's certainly what public-opinion polls indicate and it's what Canadian politicians appear to mostly believe.

But if you thought the previous debates were a farce, the coming one may make them look full and forthright.

The truth is that in the south, including Kandahar province, which is the Canadian area of operations, there is barely an aid effort now, and that's with Canadian troops here in force.

That's not because Canadian soldiers haven't tried, or are overarmed mouth-breathers unable to grasp the delicate nuance of reconstruction and development work, the bleating of some NGOs notwithstanding.

Soldiers are damned capable, better in my mind than the earnest folks at the aid agencies who claim to know best how to deliver help. And the troops have made a genuine difference in myriad small ways, which is how development really happens on the ground.

But the real aim here is to build the capacity of Afghans – in government, in its institutions such as the army and police and in politicians and district leaders – and that is painfully slow and barely visible work, especially when the good folks keep getting killed off and beheaded by those with whom Mr. Layton would conduct negotiations.

And it can't be done on any real scale until there's what everyone here calls security, by which they really mean someone has to regularly kick the snot out of the Taliban and their allies until they are reduced, as appears to be happening in Kandahar province, to suicide and roadside bombings and fleeting attacks, and eventually fewer of those, too.

That takes soldiers, and soldiers who are willing to fight, and suffer losses, and occasionally emerge with bloody noses. Canadian soldiers, including, most remarkably, the families of those who have died here,

remain willing and committed. The Brits and Americans aside, none of Canada's NATO allies have shown much eagerness to step up to the plate, nor has anyone else.

So the truth of it is, if Parliament decides that, as Mr. MacKay put it, "our current configuration," meaning combat troops, will end in early 2009, no one should draw comfort from the promise that "the aid work" will continue merrily on. It won't. Neither is it likely another country will step up to fill the vacuum left by departing Canadian soldiers, and even if one does, they won't be as good at the hard work – of killing and being killed, as well as talking and building – as Canadians are. And Afghanistan will slide deeper into the chaos that as always is on a low boil, burbling within.

That's why I left Kandahar yesterday feeling ashamed. Where failure itself is often honourable, failing to stay the course is not, and that's what's in the air.

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ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; defence; strife; political

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

# THE AFGHAN MISSION: UPLIFTING STATISTICS AT TECHNICAL BRIEFING 'There's been tremendous progress here,' Canadian envoy says

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**IDN:** 072480206

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**PAGE:** A16

**BYLINE:** ALAN FREEMAN

**SECTION:** International News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** Ottawa ONT

**WORDS:** 507

**WORD COUNT:** 495

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ALAN FREEMAN OTTAWA Seventy hand-pumps, 1,000 wells, 100 reservoirs, 650 kilometres of rehabilitated roads. These were just some of the accomplishments Canadian officials listed yesterday as they briefed journalists on Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

In the first of what are promised to become monthly technical briefings on the Afghan mission, Canada's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Arif Lalani, and three senior officials who would not be named, painted a uniformly optimistic picture of the military and development situation in the country.

"There's been tremendous progress here," said Mr. Lalani, adding that governance, security, policing and economic development have all improved. "I'm quite confident that we're going to continue to make progress." Only when journalists asked about reports that the Taliban have effectively taken back half of the strategic territory in the Panjwai and Zhari districts that Canadian and other NATO troops seized a year ago did the officials concede that everything may not be going to plan.

One official admitted that while the Afghan National Army is improving, "when we look at the national police, there is still work to be done." He added that the situation can be difficult in isolated locations, and that it is important to make sure that checkpoints are maintained and supported.

In fact, reports from the front say checkpoints that Canadian forces once manned have been abandoned after being passed to the Afghan police.

Mr. Lalani dismissed concerns about the loss of territory, saying, "There is always a back and forth." Another official responded that "progress is always measured in time." Yet another official said it is recognized that the national police are behind the Afghan army in terms of progress.

Mr. Lalani said that what was important is that security has improved, more Afghan police are on the job and more children are in school.

The briefing for journalists was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation that included plenty of uplifting statistics. Access to medical services in the country was up by 83 per cent and infant mortality had declined by 22 per cent. More than 5,000 women in Kandahar were receiving literacy training and over 200,000 people in the province have received emergency food aid.

The officials pointed to a series of recent accomplishments in the area of development including the construction or rehabilitation between March and June of more than 100 reservoirs, installation of 70 hand pumps, 1,000 wells, 100 irrigation canals and 650 kilometres of roads.

Some of the statistics were less impressive after a second look.

For example, the presentation boasted that 420,000 square metres of land had been cleared of mines in Kandahar since March, 2005.

That's less than one-half of a square kilometre cleared after 2 1/2 years of effort.

Mr. Lalani also provided a detailed list of the number of meetings he has had with Afghan and other officials in recent days, and praised his diplomats for working 16 hours a day, seven days a week, saying he had to lean on them to take a break.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: foreign policy; foreign aid; reconstruction; strife; internal security; policy

PERSONAL NAME: Arif Lalani

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

# Provost Marshal cleared of torture allegations

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**IDN:** 072480205

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**PAGE:** A16

**BYLINE:** PAUL KORING

**SECTION:** International News

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:**

**WORDS:** 384

**WORD COUNT:** 384

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PAUL KORING A previously undisclosed criminal investigation into the Canadian Forces top cop has concluded that allegations he may have aided or abetted the torture of detainees were unfounded, the Defence Department announced yesterday.

The exoneration came as a surprise, even to the original complainant, Amnesty International Canada, which was unaware that a criminal probe had been ordered last February when the rights group made the allegations to the independent military police watchdog.

"It's a surprise to us to learn that a criminal investigation was launched and it's an equal surprise to hear that it has come to an end," said Alex Neve, secretary-general of Amnesty International Canada, which along with the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association filed a complaint with the Military Police Complaints Commission seven months ago.

The MPCC investigation is still under way and Mr. Neve said it was "troubling to us" that the hitherto undisclosed criminal investigation had cleared the Provost Marshal, navy Captain Steve Moore, before the independent watchdog had concluded its review.

In its original letter to the MPCC, Amnesty accused Capt. Moore – who heads the military police – of "a willful blindness to the consequences of transferring detainees" to Afghan security forces.

By doing so when it was widely known that torture and abuse were endemic in Afghan prisons, "the Provost Marshal and unidentified members of the military police may have aided or abetted the torture of detainees," the complaint alleged.

In its announcement yesterday, the Defence Department said: "The investigation has concluded that there is no evidence to support the allegations contained in the complaint with respect to the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal and that there is no evidence of any criminal act by the CFPM." Captain Cindy Tessier confirmed that the announcement was the first time the Canadian Forces had publicly indicated an investigation was under way. But the Canadian Forces spokeswoman rejected Mr.

Neve's suggestion that the conclusion of the investigation by the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service would have an impact on the separate, broader and civilian oversight investigation by the MPCC.

"There is no intention for this to pre-empt what the MPCC is doing," she said.



Because CFNIS investigators report to the Provost Marshal, the military investigators turned the case over to two senior RCMP officers who conducted the probe.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: human rights; prisoners; justice; inquiries

PERSONAL NAME: Steve Moore

ORGANIZATION NAME: Amnesty International Canada; Armed Forces

# THE AFGHAN MISSION How about extending a bipartisan hand? If Mr. Dion is still open to argument, here's why withdrawing in 2009 will damage the national interest

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL  
**IDN:** 072480158  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**PAGE:** A21 (ILLUS)  
**BYLINE:** DAVID BERCUSON  
**SECTION:** Comment  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:**  
**WORDS:** 887  
**WORD COUNT:** 889

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DAVID BERCUSON Director of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary  
Some time in the next few months, Parliament will almost certainly debate and vote on a motion to extend Canada's current mission in Afghanistan. In fact, Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has vowed to force a snap vote on the mission at the first available opportunity.

Meantime, the government has replied with less than clarity, as it has done so often these days. The Tories and the Liberals are playing partisan politics with one of the most serious issues the country has faced in decades.

Despite the Liberal Leader's increasingly shrill rhetoric against mission extension, withdrawal in February of 2009 will severely damage Canada's national interest. Mr. Dion – and the Tories – ought to make a serious effort at finding a bipartisan way of extending the mission. That can only happen if both parties take a serious look at how they have approached the issue thus far.

Supporters of the mission, including some prominent Conservatives, have labelled the mission as Canada's contribution to a "world war" against Islamic extremism.

That is a mistake. It has sowed untold confusion among Canadians who – if they know anything about history at all – know what a world war is. Afghanistan is not Normandy or Vimy Ridge. It is very important the Taliban do not regain control of Afghanistan and make it a safe haven for al-Qaeda, but the Taliban do not pose an existential threat to Canada's existence. If mission supporters dial down the rhetoric, the atmosphere surrounding this debate might get clearer and less poisonous.

The government might even gain some traction if Stephane Dion were shown more respect. He demonstrated both his political courage and his commitment to Canada beyond any doubt when he engineered the Clarity Act after the 1995 Quebec referendum.

Mr. Dion might have deep philosophical reasons for opposing mission extension – he certainly acts as if he does – but he might not.

He is, after all, the leader of the same party that produced the 2005 International Policy Statement (IPS), which took Canada into Kandahar, introduced the concept of the 3 Ds (development, defence, and diplomacy) and pledged to restore Canada's place in the world by, in part, rebuilding the military. The IPS is the blueprint for much of what the Tories have done.

Mr. Dion should think about how an election over this mission will damage the very national unity he himself holds so dear. It may ultimately shatter the Liberal Party as the conscription election of 1917 did.

Mr. Dion should also give Stephen Harper some credit for breaking a significant precedent when he sought a Commons vote on mission extension in May, 2006. That was the first binding vote on a Canadian troop deployment by Parliament since 1939.

If Stephane Dion is so intellectually stiff as to go ahead with his threat no matter what, then only his own caucus can stop him, which is highly doubtful. But if he is still open to argument, he ought to consider some very cogent facts: First, victory over the Taliban will not be possible without more help from Pakistan, but that help may be just around the corner.

The rapidly evolving political situation gives new hope that Pakistani acquiescence to Taliban activities may be coming to an end. If President Pervez Musharraf and the exiled Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister, arrive at an agreement that sees him leaving the military and Ms.

Bhutto returning to office, secularism will be greatly strengthened.

If so, action to curtail Taliban activities may be close and we must surely wait to see how that situation unfolds before we decide what to do.

Second, Canada cannot stay in Afghanistan indefinitely, but given two Liberal government decisions to intervene militarily in Afghanistan and a third to send Canadian forces to fight the Taliban in Kandahar in 2005, we have a strong moral obligation to stay until the Afghan National Army is large enough, well-enough trained and well-enough equipped to secure the country. Pulling out now gives the ANA no chance whatsoever to evolve into such a force.

Third, in putting Canada back into Kandahar in 2005, the Liberals placed Canadian soldiers into the "thin red line" that must hold fast if there is any chance of ultimate victory over the Taliban.

To pull them out now would make a mockery of Liberal policy decisions by the very government Mr. Dion was a member of.

Finally, although many Canadians disagree with the mission, majorities are often wrong. Canada is a representative democracy and the Liberals know as well as the Tories that sometimes things need doing that a majority of Canadians won't agree with. A large majority of Canadians were in favour of capital punishment when it was abolished back in the 1970s. The majority was wrong, Parliament was right.

What we need most now is a mature debate on the issues. There's no hope of maturity from the Bloc Quebecois or the NDP, but it is surely not too much to expect that the man who puts himself forward as a potential prime minister of Canada treat this very serious issue with the respect it deserves. Up to now, he has not.

David Bercuson is also director of programs for the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; foreign policy; defence; strife

PERSONAL NAME: Stephane Dion

ORGANIZATION NAME: Conservative Party of Canada; Liberal Party; Armed Forces

# In Australia, Afghan angst is muted – unlike here

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**PAGE:** A21  
**BYLINE:** JEFFREY SIMPSON  
**SECTION:** Comment Column  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:** Sydney AUSTRALIA  
**WORDS:** 700  
**WORD COUNT:** 665

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JEFFREY SIMPSON SYDNEY Australia did not have to send soldiers to fight in Afghanistan.

It is not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as are the other countries involved in the conflict. Afghanistan is far away and Australian forces are already deployed in Iraq, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste.

But off went the Australian military, including a crack special task force, as part of a commitment of about 1,000 personnel.

No major political party is asking to bring them home, unlike in Canada. The opposition Labor Party, leading in the polls on the eve of a general election, calls the Afghan mission a "central priority" for Australian foreign policy.

Contrast that position with the "bring the troops home" policy of the Canadian party of the left, the NDP. It would appear, therefore, that even if the Australian government changes, the Afghan commitment won't, something that can't be said for Canada.

Australians, however, appear as divided as Canadians about the Afghan mission, even if their political leaders are not. A recent Lowy Institute poll of 1,003 people showed 46 per cent in favour of continued involvement, and 46 per cent opposed. The principal reason given for backing the mission was to "support the U.S. under the U.S. alliance." Therein lies a tale.

Australia, being far removed from the United States, instinctively wants to hug America closely to remind the superpower of Australia's presence, whereas Canada, being so close to its neighbour, sometimes tries to distance itself from it.

By 3 to 2, Australians consider their alliance with the U.S. important for Australia's security. The ratio used to be almost 2 to 1, but that decline reflects the unpopularity of George W. Bush, whose presidency has sullied his country's reputation in Australia.

By 4 to 1, Australians told the Lowy poll they like Americans.

Even Labor, in contrast to anything Canada's NDP or Liberals would say, declares in its platform that the party is "firmly committed to maintain and strengthen Australia's close relationship with the U.S." The Bush factor, however, explains in part the unpopularity of Australia's involvement in Iraq. Prime Minister John Howard sent Australian troops to Iraq early. Australia still maintains 1,575 personnel in the country, mostly in

the relatively safe south. That the Australians haven't lost anyone in combat might account for why demands to end involvement in Iraq have not convulsed Australian politics.

The same Lowy poll that showed the country split evenly on Afghanistan indicated by 57 per cent to 37 per cent that Australians wanted their troops out of Iraq.

Precipitous withdrawal, however, would scratch at that Australian itch about the importance of the U.S. relationship. Even Labor, which opposed the initial deployment, speaks carefully about "not remaining in Iraq indefinitely." As if anyone but Iraqis will.

That Australia is not contemplating an early exit from Afghanistan also relates to the country's feeling – not at all mirrored in Canada – that terrorism remains a threat.

Australians remember that their embassy in Jakarta was bombed in 2004 and that many Australians were killed or wounded in the Bali bombings of 2002 and 2005.

Terrorists from the Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiyah take inspiration from, and are believed to have links with, al-Qaeda. Some are thought to have trained in camps in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule.

Australian police also rounded up suspected terrorists in Sydney, mostly from an area populated by Lebanese Muslims.

It might strike Canadians as strange when they look at a map of the world and see Australia so far removed from anywhere, but terrorism and historical memory serve to cause Australian policymakers, if not the general public, to worry about instability. That's one reason why Australia is leading an international force to bring order to the troubled Solomon Islands and why another Australian force is in Timor-Leste. That tiny country, formerly East Timor, has been racked by violence since independence in 2002.

Both missions appear to have bipartisan support in a country where military deployments, either as robust peacekeepers or fighters, don't provoke quite the angst they do in Canada.

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ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Australia; Canada; United States

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; defence; strife; foreign relations; public opinion polls

# ARMED FORCES State of confusion

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**BYLINE:**

**SECTION:** Editorial

**EDITION:** Metro

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In a troubling report, three retired military officers have concluded that the recent reorganization of the Canadian Armed Forces looks far better on paper than it does in reality. The creation of operational and regional commands in early 2006 has fragmented central control.

Efforts to boost the efficiency of the existing troops, increase troop strength and purchase new equipment have overwhelmed the National Defence Department. And the war in Afghanistan has diverted resources away from the Canada Command, which is supposed to oversee domestic operations and contingencies. It's a deeply disturbing assessment of the Forces' capabilities in a risky time.

The report – prepared at the request of the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier – indicates that each of those factors would represent a significant challenge: "However, when aggregated, they constitute the equivalent of an organizational perfect storm." It depicts a dangerously disorganized reorganization.

This is surely not the outcome that Gen. Hillier foresaw when he drafted plans to transform the military from a Cold War force into one that could cope with a volatile, post-9/11 world. The new command structure, which became operational on Feb. 1, 2006, included a Strategic Joint Staff coupled with four commands for Canadian operations, forces conducting international operations, special forces and operational support for deployed troops. Under Canada Command, as well, there are six regional joint task forces.

All of this would make sense, except that the Strategic Joint Staff spends most of its time on current operations instead of strategic analysis. The new command structure "with its multiple vertically stove-piped headquarters" impedes idea-sharing and the streamlining of efforts. And the regional commanders have little delegated authority, even for routine tasks, so everything funnels up to Canada Command.

The report concludes that the new structure is largely personality driven, which could be a weakness when Gen. Hillier departs. In the meantime, it says that Gen. Hillier should find the time to personally re-engage with the transformation that he started. Only the Chief of the Defence Staff, says the report, can overcome the parochialism and inter-agency squabbling. Otherwise, the process could disintegrate, eliminating many benefits from the exercise.

Gen. Hillier owes it to the troops to finish what he started.

**ADDED SEARCH TERMS:**

**GEOGRAPHIC NAME:** Canada

SUBJECT TERM: defence; policy

PERSONAL NAME: Rick Hillier

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces



# HOUSE OF COMMONS: NEW SESSION BEGINS OCT. 16 PM set to reboot Parliament Throne Speech next month opens door for a confidence vote – and possibly an election

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL  
**IDN:** 072480076  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**PAGE:** A4 (ILLUS)  
**BYLINE:** BRIAN LAGHI AND BILL CURRY  
**SECTION:** National News  
**EDITION:** Metro  
**DATELINE:** Ottawa ONT  
**WORDS:** 635  
**WORD COUNT:** 657

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**BRIAN LAGHI AND BILL CURRY** With reports from Campbell Clark and Daniel Leblanc **OTTAWA** Prime Minister Stephen Harper moved yesterday to give his government a new parliamentary start and a fresh legislative agenda, setting the stage for a vote on the Conservatives' survival.

MPs will return to Ottawa one month later than scheduled after Mr. Harper asked Governor-General Michaëlle Jean yesterday to end the current session of Parliament and begin a new one Oct. 16. The government will then unveil a new Speech from the Throne to reinvigorate an agenda that critics say has run its course.

The vote on the Throne Speech is considered a confidence vote and could plunge the country into a fall election if all three opposition parties oppose it.

"It's time to launch the next phase of our mandate," Mr. Harper said in a prepared statement. "We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election." Ending the session means that all legislation that has not been passed – except for private members' bills – will die and require reintroduction if the Tories want to push ahead with them. That would include many of the government's key bills: proposals to terminate the long-gun registry, two Senate reform bills, justice bills that would increase penalties for repeat offenders and impose tighter bail conditions and a bill extending the Human Rights Act to native reserves.

Other bills that are irking the government – such as its own Clean Air Act, which was dramatically altered by the opposition – would also die.

Delaying the return of Parliament until Oct. 16 also means MPs and their staff will be available to work on the campaigns for the Newfoundland and Ontario provincial elections on Oct. 9 and 10, respectively.

Federal Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion set a high bar for his party's support, insisting the government must pledge there will be no extension of the military mission in Kandahar, that it allow a vote on the amended clean-air bill and that it bring forward proposals for the ailing manufacturing sector and for addressing poverty. "We cannot stand up in the house and vote for a Throne Speech that we consider detrimental for the Canadian people and against the honour of Canada," Mr. Dion said in an interview.

NDP Leader Jack Layton called the decision to prorogue the session a waste of time. "Students have gone back to class. Working families are back from vacation. Why is Stephen Harper locking MPs out?" he asked in a statement.

Mr. Layton was travelling yesterday and could not be reached, but a party official said the NDP would take some time before deciding whether to present a "shopping list" of demands on the government heading into the confidence vote.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe said he would support the Throne Speech only if it includes an end date of February, 2009, for the Afghan combat mission. He said it will not be enough for the government to simply promise to put any future military mandate in Afghanistan to a vote in the House. "If they are not clear on Afghanistan . . . if they say there will be a vote, that is not sufficient. Everything in the Speech from the Throne requires a vote, so it will not be a revelation to say there will be a vote," Mr. Duceppe said in a television interview.

Mr. Harper's decision comes as the Tories and the Liberals fight it out in the election polls. The most recent survey by the Strategic Counsel for The Globe and Mail and CTV News found the two parties deadlocked at 33-per-cent support.

Tory House Leader Peter Van Loan said the government will seek to revive most of the bills that will die with the new session, although the heavily amended environmental bill will not be one of them.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: government; political

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Conservative Party of Canada

# IN BRIEF Taliban hostage negotiator for Koreans reported killed

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**PUBLICATION:** GLOBE AND MAIL

**IDN:** 072480006

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**PAGE:** A19

**BYLINE:**

**SECTION:** International News

**SOURCE:** AP

**EDITION:** Metro

**DATELINE:** Kabul, Afghanistan

**WORDS:** 157

**WORD COUNT:** 168

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AP Kabul, Afghanistan Less than a week after the Taliban released South Korean hostages, Afghan forces said yesterday that they killed Mullah Mateen, the Taliban commander behind the kidnappings.

He was killed along with 16 other militants in fighting late Monday and early yesterday in the central province of Ghazni, where the insurgents seized 23 South Koreans on July 19, a provincial spokesman said.

The spokesman added that Mullah Mateen played a key role in the kidnapping, including telephone negotiations with the government in the early days of the crisis.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said seven insurgents were killed in the overnight clash, and described all of them as ordinary fighters. He said the Taliban did not have a commander called Mullah Mateen.

In the past, Afghan authorities have often made claims to have killed local Taliban commanders that turned out to be wrong. At the same time, Taliban spokesman have played down or lied about their battlefield losses.

**ADDED SEARCH TERMS:**

**GEOGRAPHIC NAME:** Afghanistan

**SUBJECT TERM:** strife; deaths; kidnapping; hostages; south koreans

**PERSONAL NAME:** Mullah Mateen

**ORGANIZATION NAME:** Taliban

# Military intelligence struggling; Lack of resources could impact Afghan mission

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050022  
**PUBLICATION:** Calgary Herald  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A7

**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Herald Archive, Reuters / The Canadian Expeditionary Force Command — which oversees Canada's mission in Afghanistan — is having difficulty providing troops on the ground with the timely and relevant intelligence they require. ;

**KEYWORDS:** SECURITY; ESPIONAGE; CANADIANS; TERRORISM  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 455

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The military command in charge of running the Afghanistan mission and all other overseas troop deployments is having difficulty providing the needed intelligence to support such operations, warns a Canadian Forces report obtained by the Ottawa Citizen.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force Command "clearly suffers from a lack of intelligence capability," concludes the report prepared in January for Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier.

The report, compiled by two generals and an admiral, was prepared for the Harper government earlier this year, but never released publicly.

It provides a status check on the military's transformation into an efficient and relevant organization for the future. Part of that change, announced 18 months ago, included the creation of four new commands, including the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM), which oversees the Afghanistan mission and international operations.

But the report warns that the command does not have the resources to complete the intelligence preparation fundamental to the planning of an operation. It also lacks an around-the-clock intelligence capability in Ottawa.

"In conflicts such as Afghanistan, which are widely characterized as intelligence-driven and further described as the wars of company and platoon commanders, the provision of timely and actionable tactical intelligence must be viewed as an urgent and no-fail requirement," according to the document. "Issues related to the provision of timely and actionable intelligence to CEFCOM, and by extension, to deployed forces, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."

The senior officers recommend that a common operations centre for three of the new commands be created to ensure more effective and efficient delivery of intelligence to those in the field.

The report also notes that another office, the Chief of Defence Intelligence or CDI, has been providing good support to various organizations in the military and that should improve in the future as more analysts are hired.

But it also warns that the "CDI cannot support two lines of operations with currently available assets; therefore, it is unable to meet the intelligence capability expectations of the government."

The report recommends the consolidation of the CDI's offices into one facility, and also the creation of what is called a fusion capability and intelligence enhancement.

Hillier has been pushing for that capability, which is expected to end up as part of a new command centre in Ottawa that will marshal intelligence data from combat zones and from across the country.

Military officers privately say the general has been frustrated at the lack of immediate information from the battlefield in Afghanistan.

The \$64-million program to build the joint information and intelligence fusion capability would bring together large amounts of information, including video imagery, still photographs, map displays and other data as it is transmitted from various sources. In some cases, officers would be able to watch live imagery from unmanned aerial drones flying on missions in Afghanistan.

# PM throws down the gauntlet; Confidence vote set for Harper's throne speech

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050014  
**PUBLICATION:** Calgary Herald  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A4  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA  
**BYLINE:** Tony Seskus  
**SOURCE:** Calgary Herald and Herald News Services  
**WORD COUNT:** 691

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper put his minority government Tuesday on course for a political showdown by suspending Parliament and setting up a vote of confidence that could trigger an election.

Harper announced he will convene a new session on Oct. 16 and present a throne speech outlining his new agenda — a move that will effectively challenge the three opposition parties to bring down the government in a confidence vote.

"I'm pleased to report that Canada is united, our government is clean and our economy is strong. Now it's time to launch the next phase of our mandate," Harper said in a statement from Ottawa.

The Conservatives control only 125 of the 308 seats in the House of Commons — and Harper's news got a frosty reception.

In Calgary, Liberal party House leader Ralph Goodale said the government has lost momentum and was "desperately trying to change the channel."

Staking out his party's turf on one potential election issue — the Tory government's broken promise on taxing income trusts — Goodale and finance critic John McCallum promised members of the energy trust sector that a Liberal government would rewrite the Conservatives' controversial legislation.

"We have condemned the government's policy from the very beginning," McCallum told reporters.

Parliament had been due to resume mid-September, but the one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech.

The House of Commons will then hold a confidence vote on the speech and if the Conservative minority is defeated, it will prompt a federal election.

Recent opinion polls show none of the major parties has made significant headway since the January 2006 general election.

David Taras, a political analyst at the University of Calgary, says Tuesday's gambit amounts to a political game of "chicken" with little downside for Harper.

"If the throne speech passes, then he's home free . . . on his way to a budget," Taras said.

"If he's defeated, he gets all the publicity of a throne speech — and all the promises — and then he hangs it around the neck of the Liberals and says "These guys are to blame.""

Calgary–Nose Hill MP Diane Ablonczy, the government's secretary of state for small business and tourism, wouldn't speculate as to how the opposition parties would respond to the throne speech, but believes Canadians are "pretty happy" with how things are working.

"I think the government has shown a willingness to be flexible, to work collegially with other parties, to make compromises where those are required in the Canadian political arena," Ablonczy said.

But if there's one potential stumbling block, it appears to be Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

The Liberals and Bloc Quebecois haven't been pushing to go to the polls, but both have been clear they oppose any plans to extend the Afghan combat mission beyond its scheduled finish date of February 2009.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said Tuesday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

NDP Leader Jack Layton, who wants the 2,500 troops in Afghanistan brought back immediately, accused Harper on Tuesday of wasting time but did not mention how his party might vote on the speech.

So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond February 2009.

As Harper announced his plans, Liberals Goodale and McCallum sat down with about 35 "players and experts" from the energy trust sector, which is still stinging from the Tories' decision last year to begin taxing income trusts at the same levels — 31.5 per cent — as Canadian corporations starting in 2011.

McCallum said the Liberals, if elected, will replace the Conservative law with their own that would put a 10 per cent tax on all income trust distributions, which would be refundable to Canadian residents. The Liberals have been floating this proposal for several months.

He said the Liberal tax plan would be sufficient to cover any leakage that may exist and that the Liberals would also take the necessary time after that to decide on new rules to govern the creation of new trusts.

McCallum charged that the Tory legislation "has destroyed an extraordinarily productive energy–trusts sector here in Alberta."

Chisholm Pothier, a spokesman for Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, said the latest Liberal musings on income trusts can't be taken seriously.

"Why should anyone trust anything the Liberals have to say on income trusts?" Pothier said. "They created uncertainty in the markets and ended up with an RCMP investigation."

But John Dielwart, co–chair of the Coalition of Canadian Energy Trusts, which has been lobbying for changes to the Tory legislation, expressed frustration with the government when asked how he'd vote in a future election.

"I can guarantee you one thing, the Conservatives that I sent to office are not the Conservatives that are governing this country today," he said.





# Harper looking for something 'new' to get out in front

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050029  
**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial  
**PAGE:** A9  
**COLUMN:** Barbara Yaffe  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA  
**BYLINE:** Barbara Yaffe  
**SOURCE:** Vancouver Sun  
**WORD COUNT:** 573

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As autumn dawns and children troop back to school, politicians are conjuring new ways to charm and woo as they prepare to return to Ottawa.

The Commons is set to reconvene Sept. 17. But many suspect Stephen Harper will launch a fall session with a mid-October throne speech to kick off a whole new season of parliamentary antics.

For Harper's purposes, the latter would be a way of making a big splash through formalities involving the Governor-General, which presumably would breathe life into his government.

The PM took a stab at re-energizing his team a few weeks ago with a cabinet shuffle.

Such measures have a purpose. Conservatives are stalled in polls. And Harper's line, touting Conservatives as Canada's "new government," is wearing thin. The Strategic Counsel last week put Liberals and Conservatives in a dead heat, each with 33 per cent support. An Angus Reid poll days later put Conservatives at 33 per cent, Liberals at 29 per cent.

Moreover, more than 40 per cent prefer neither Harper nor Liberal Stephane Dion as prime minister, according to the Reid poll.

These are odd results, given that nearly 60 per cent say the Harperites have put the country "on the right track." The party, it would appear, is being held back by Harper himself, perceived as being too partisan and controlling, and in league with U.S. President George W. Bush.

Liberals, following a caucus retreat last week in St. John's, were eager to exploit such perceptions about Harper.

Dion, who has his own personality problems -- with an approval rating among Canadians of 14 per cent -- spoke of a "richer, fairer, greener Canada" under the Liberals, "with an independent voice in the world."

Dion, who claims to have visited 50 ridings during his first summer as official Opposition leader, referred to "the secrecy and deception of the Conservative government."

He described the Harperites as "a one-man show: the President Stephen Harper Show ... an incompetent government, so right-wing, so close to the Bush ideology."

Dion pledged to rebuild "a strong relationship of trust between the Canadian people and the Liberal party. Trust: nothing is more important than that."

And that surely is Harper's Achilles heel. Canadians are finding the guy hard to trust.

More important than anything the PM pledges in a throne speech is the personal impression Harper will give Canadians of himself when the Commons gets back to work. He needs to loosen up, share the limelight with his ministers and improve his relationship with the media.

Chances are, he won't be able to overcome either his penchant for secrecy or his dictatorial bent.

And if that's the case, Harper — ever in quest of a majority government — might try to boost his crew's standing by pitching some high-profile wares that would strongly appeal to voters. Such as:

- A target date for a much-awaited, if economically unsound, second percentage point GST cut.
- A plan for a respectable, orderly withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan once defined objectives are met; or a shift in the mission toward humanitarian work.
- A strategy to boost Canada's productivity — an area where this country lags so badly behind the U.S.

Dion, meanwhile, has his own work to do in the coming parliamentary sitting. He has been pandering to public opinion without establishing a shred of credibility as a leader.

He wants Canada out of Afghanistan by February 2009 without addressing ramifications for this nation's reputation or the war-torn country's welfare.

He'd cave to Newfoundland's excessive demands for equalization even if it reached "have-province" status.

He has been pushing the green button without addressing the possible impact on Canada's economy of aggressive environmental initiatives.

The Liberal leader offers nothing on the tax-cut side at a time when Ottawa consistently is toting up multibillion-dollar surpluses.

Dion recklessly condemns the Security and Prosperity Partnership with the U.S. without recognizing the importance of the two nations' integrated economies.

As for New Democrats, they are surely scratching their heads and wondering what they must do to get noticed during the dogfight between Grits and Tories. Polls put them well back, at between 17 and 19 per cent.

byaffe@png.canwest.com

# PM edges closer to early federal election; Harper's decision to open a new session gives opposition the chance to defeat Conservative minority in confidence vote

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050005  
**PUBLICATION:** Vancouver Sun  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A2  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 306

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OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Tuesday pushed the country a step closer to a possible 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 17.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech — followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009. So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements Tuesday how the Liberals and NDP will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP have been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal leader Stephane Dion said Tuesday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

He also wants Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It will take all three opposition parties together to bring down the government. Recent opinion polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.

PM edges closer to early federal election; Harper's decision to open a new session gives opposition the chance

"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was, 'what can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

# Time and effort needed

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050054  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Opinion  
**PAGE:** A16  
**BYLINE:** Barry Kennington, Hamilton  
**SOURCE:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 70

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Re: 'In the line of fire' (Sept. 1)

Congratulations to Steve Buist on his article about Private Mark Graham.

I hope readers noticed Graham's comments regarding his reason for wanting to be in Afghanistan, to help rebuild the country so that the citizens can be free to enjoy their life and to educate their children.

This will take years, and I don't know whether members of NATO and our politicians have the willingness to put this much time and effort into the project.

# Top military cop won't be charged

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050013  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Canada/World  
**PAGE:** A3  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**SOURCE:** The Canadian Press  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 88

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Canada's top military cop was cleared yesterday of potential criminal wrongdoing in the controversy involving Afghan detainees.

Naval Captain Steve Moore, the provost marshal, was cleared following an investigation by two senior RCMP officers, who'd been called in by the military over allegations that Taliban prisoners captured by Canadians and handed over to Afghan authorities faced possible abuse and even torture.

A separate probe by military officials is still underway into whether individual military police officers in Afghanistan could be held accountable if abuse has taken place.

# PM gambles on new throne speech

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050012  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Canada/World  
**PAGE:** A3  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**SOURCE:** Hamilton Spectator wire services  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 282

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper has cut short the current session of Parliament and will bring MPs back to work Oct. 16 with a new throne speech and the renewed threat of a fall federal election.

Nineteen months into the government's term, Harper said yesterday it is time to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"Canadians gave us a mandate for change, but we're just getting started," he said in a statement that did not give any hints about the way forward in the new session. Previously, he has said he will continue with the priorities set out in the last election rather than set a new policy agenda for the fall.

Yesterday's move lets the government clear out a backlog of legislation stalled by the opposition's refusal to support the Tory agenda and the unwillingness of the government to submit to changes. This applies to Harper's law-and-order agenda as well as environmental initiatives brought forward by the government and opposition parties last spring.

But the throne speech, which must have the support of a majority of MPs in order to avoid an snap election, will launch a showdown over the future of the Canadian combat mission in Afghanistan and the determination to settle its future after the current commitment ends in February 2009.

One Conservative described the move as a political gamble. It will either give the Tories a pass to govern freely until a budget is presented in spring 2008 or it will lead to an election the party thinks would at least result in another Tory minority.

MPs were to have returned to work in Ottawa on Sept. 17.

Their delayed return will also free-up Conservative party workers to help Ontario PC Leader John Tory in the provincial campaign, which goes to a vote Oct. 10.

## A soldier's story;

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**IDNUMBER** 200709010118  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.09.01  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Local  
**PAGE:** A1  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Mark Graham;  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 113

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Tuesday will be the one-year anniversary of the friendly fire death of Hamilton's Private Mark Graham. The one-time Olympic athlete was in Afghanistan to make a difference. He believed in the Canadian mission and was passionate about the Afghan people. "These people need help," he wrote in his diary a few months before he was killed. "We ... must extend a hand to help so as to provide a stable environment for thousands of children ... " It's a tragic irony that he lost his life at the hands of an American pilot.



# In the line of fire

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**IDNUMBER** 200709010117  
**PUBLICATION:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**DATE:** 2007.09.01  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Discover  
**PAGE:** D1

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: The Hamilton Spectator / Mark Graham; Photo: Department of National Defence / Private Mark Graham, right, was killed around dawn last Labour Day by a U.S. air force fighter plane, an A-10A Thunderbolt, nicknamed the Warthog. Graham's task was to drive a light-armoured vehicle, or LAV-3. As he made an entry in his diary while awaiting orders in his LAV, the Taliban attacked without warning. ; Photo: Toronto Star File Photo / Corporal Chad Linden, left, and Master Corporal Allan Johnson were with Charlie Company of the Royal Canadian Regiment a year ago at Ma'Sum Ghar, Afghanistan, where a battle with the Taliban left dozens of Canadians injured and five dead, including Private Mark Graham of Hamilton. ; Photo: Spectator File Photos / Private Mark Graham was killed around dawn last Labour Day by a U.S. air force fighter plane, an A-10A Thunderbolt, nicknamed the Warthog. ; Photo: Graham's task was to drive a light-armoured vehicle, or LAV-3. As he made an entry in his diary while awaiting orders in his LAV, the Taliban attacked without warning. ; Photo: Private Mark Graham ;

**BYLINE:** STEVE BUIST  
**SOURCE:** The Hamilton Spectator  
**COPYRIGHT:** © 2007 Torstar Corporation  
**WORD COUNT:** 3837

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Three seconds.

Actually, 3.3 seconds, to be precise.

That's just about the same amount of time it takes to read this sentence.

Still, with the unimaginable fury that's been built into today's military weaponry, that's enough time for a fighter plane's machine-gun to spit out 211 rounds of high-explosive, armour-piercing ammunition – brutal, nasty stuff designed specifically to fragment and then rip apart whatever it touches.

On the manufacturer's website, there are pictures of the ammo slicing through layers of inch-thick metal plates lined in a row. Sometimes, the deadly

17-centimetre-long bullet contains uranium, heavier than the usual tungsten alloy, just to give it a little added kick.

Three seconds. That's all.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

So many lives affected because of a tragic mistake that lasted three short seconds just before dawn on Sept. 4, 2006.

## One bloody weekend Part 1

Canadians who lived through the carnage tell the tale of two deadly days at Ma'Sum Ghar

Steve Buist

The dozens of Canadian soldiers left dazed and bleeding in the faint, gathering light before the sun cracked the horizon. Their families in Canada who'd soon learn the news by telephone.

The American pilot, never publicly identified, who ignored the information on his cockpit display and now carries the weight of that fateful mistake with him each day.

And one dead Canadian soldier, a 33-year-old former Olympic track star from Hamilton's west Mountain named Mark Graham, killed not by the enemy but by his allies.

Tuesday marks the first anniversary of the friendly fire incident in southern Afghanistan that killed Graham and wounded 35 other Canadian soldiers.

A long-awaited report released by the Canadian government recently concluded the American fighter pilot was solely responsible for Graham's death and the other injuries because he neglected to confirm his cockpit display, which showed he was strafing the wrong target.

The friendly fire incident was the final, bitter insult of a bloody Labour Day weekend in southern Afghanistan for the Royal Canadian Regiment's Charlie Company.

A day earlier, four members of Charlie Company were killed and another six were injured when they were ambushed in a field by the Taliban.

In less than 24 hours, C Company's 8 Platoon had been horribly shredded. When the dust cleared Labour Day morning, only eight of the platoon's 37 soldiers were left unscathed.

This is the story of that deadly weekend in Afghanistan, told from the ground and from the air, from those who witnessed the carnage firsthand. Some are telling their stories for the first time.

The soldiers of RCR's Charlie Company left CFB Petawawa and began arriving at Kandahar Airfield during the first week of August 2006.

"The heat, the smell," said Captain Jeremy Hiltz, recalling his first thoughts when he reached the main Canadian base in Afghanistan.

"Bullets constantly going off because there's always people shooting on ranges and stuff, helicopters and jets coming and going."

Just 25 at the time, Hiltz was commanding officer of Charlie Company's 8 Platoon, Graham's assigned unit.

Charlie Company's mission was to help lead Operation Medusa, named for the Greek mythological being who had snakes for her hair and a gaze that could turn others to stone.

Operation Medusa was a NATO coalition offensive centred on the Panjwahi district of southern Afghanistan, about 30 kilometres southwest of Kandahar.

The objective was to secure the Taliban-controlled Highway 1, the area's major transportation route.

Even a cursory glance at a history book suggests it would be a difficult mission.

With its mountainous passes and its location in the heart of central Asia, Afghanistan was described by one historian as the "roundabout of the ancient world."

It's a country woven together over time from many rival tribes and languages, notoriously difficult to rule, but even more difficult to conquer for those through history who have been brave enough — or perhaps foolish enough — to invade. The British learned that lesson twice in the 19th century. The Soviet army would discover the same after suffering heavy losses over 10 years following their 1979 invasion.

Canada's decision to send ground troops to Afghanistan shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks has come under increasingly harsh scrutiny here at home.

The casualties continue to mount — 70 Canadian soldiers dead, to date. And there's growing criticism that no end to the war is in sight while Canada's reason for being there has become blurry.

That rankles the soldiers on the ground.

Major Matthew Sprague of Kenora was Charlie Company's commanding officer during the launch of Operation Medusa.

Sprague is stationed in Kingston now, but he'd go back to Afghanistan in a second because he's proud of what Canadian forces have helped accomplish there.

"When we first got there (Panjwaii district) at the start of September, there was maybe 100 people living there because they were too poor to leave or had nowhere to go," said Sprague.

"By the time we left in February, there were 15,000 people who lived in the area, because we'd gone in and made it secure for them.

"They're not sexy stories, so nobody picks up on them, but for all intents and purposes that's the reason we're there."

Mark Graham was also aware of the role that Canadians were playing in lives of Afghans.

In his phone calls home, he would tell his parents, Albert and Linda, about how it affected him to see the living conditions faced by young girls who were the same age as his eight-year-old daughter, Shae-Lynn.

"Mark was clear that he was there for democracy," said Linda Graham. "He knew why he was there.

"He knew it was about democracy and making a safer world."

"In the long run, all that matters to me are my set of values and morals. I believe that those of my leaders and country still remain congruent with mine. These people need help. We, who are the fortunate, must extend a hand to help so as to provide a stable environment for thousands of children to grow and contribute to the final globalization of our planet and destroy those who would oppose such vision and desire with threats of terror.

"Our planet sits on the edge of destruction and only through unity will my daughter and her children have a future of peace and prosperity."

— From Mark Graham's diary, May 2006

The start of Operation Medusa was to focus on the village of Pashmul, located on the north side of the Arghandab River, 30 kilometres southwest of the Canadian base in Kandahar.

In the three weeks leading up to the operation's launch, Charlie Company was out in the field, carrying out small missions but not yet engaged in "contact" — the army's sanitized word for direct combat with the enemy.

"We spent very little time at Kandahar Airfield — as little time as humanly possible, because that place sucks," said Sprague, who preferred to be out in the field.

"Once you left Kandahar, it was your terms," he explained. "You got to dictate the pace of things, what was going to happen, when it was going to happen."

But it also meant leaving behind even the most basic personal comforts.

The life of a Canadian soldier in Afghanistan certainly isn't glamorous.

Most of the time, Charlie Company was sleeping on the ground under the stars. One night, they slept in an onion patch.

If it rained, the soldiers would sleep on the ground beside their vehicles, which were equipped with tarps that could be pulled out for a tiny bit of protection.

"It was just something to have over our heads," said Chad Kinden, a member of Charlie Company's 7 Platoon who's now back home in Lewisporte, N.L.

Once in a while, Charlie Company would hole up in an abandoned building. Another time, they slept in a bunker system that they built.

"In December and January, it got really cold at night, so a couple of us found some stoves that were lying around and used them in our bunkers," said Kinden.D12

By the start of September, Charlie Company was moving into position on the south side of the Arghandab River for the beginning of Operation Medusa.

Prior to the launch of the offensive, coalition planes dropped leaflets in the Pashmul area, warning civilians to leave before the attack began.

"Basically: 'Get out. If you stay in, then you're the enemy,'" said Kinden.

"The only people that were left were the Taliban," Sprague added. "From our perspective, that makes things very easy because then you know who the bad guys are."

But the leaflet drop may have also set up the Canadian troops to be ambushed by the Taliban.

"They're not stupid, they can put two and two together," said Hiltz, adding that it's a fine line to navigate for the coalition forces.

"Optics are sometimes more important than tactics. If you don't give any warning and then you end up killing a bunch of civilians, which you don't want to do, it sometimes is more detrimental to us than any of the tactical achievements we've gained."

Mark Graham was born May 17, 1973, in Gordon Town, Jamaica, and came to Hamilton when he was a young boy.

He attended Chedoke Middle School, then Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School, where he excelled at track and basketball.

At 6-foot-4, with a chiselled frame of 200 pounds, Graham was an imposing, one-in-a-million physical specimen who was as gentle as a big puppy.

He specialized in the 400 metres and was named to Canada's 4x400m relay team for the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona. He also represented Canada in the 400 metres at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria.

In 1993, he earned a full track scholarship to the University of Nebraska, where he spent two seasons before transferring to Kent State University in Ohio.

Mike Caza, Graham's roommate for two years at Kent State, remembers the sprinter for his sense of humour.

"He was just a character," said Caza, who now runs an athlete training centre in suburban Cleveland. "He always had a smile on his face.

"He was always the guy who stuck out in a crowd, not just because of his physical stature but his personality, too."

Caza was a high jumper from Chatham who transferred to Kent State from Louisiana State University the same year Graham arrived from Nebraska. The two Canadian kids, both transfer students, were a natural fit to be roommates.

"There's not too many guys in the world with his build. Unbelievable genetics. And he had the athleticism to go with it.

"He was definitely a machine," said Caza. "He was obviously a very good athlete but never cocky or arrogant."

But by 1996, injuries cut short his athletic career and he was unable to qualify again for the Olympics.

For several years, Graham worked as a fitness instructor while also helping coach track and field at MacNab. In 2004, he decided to join the army, in part because he wanted the structure that military life could provide.

Basic training took him from St. Jean-sur-Richelieu in Quebec to Meaford and then eventually to CFB Petawawa, where 1st Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment is based.

Graham's role in 8 Platoon, C Company, was to drive a LAV-3, one of the eight-wheeled, light-armoured vehicles that Canadian troops use in combat.

"He's one of the nicest guys you'd ever meet," said Kinden, who was a LAV gunner at the time.

"The ladies liked him," he added with a chuckle. "Just go to the bar and he'd be the centre of attention."

Graham arrived in Kandahar in the first week of August with Charlie Company.

"Some days, Mark called me twice," said his father, Albert. "Some of the conversations, he said things, and

my answer was 'Aww, nothing will happen, let's not talk about that.'

"And he said: 'You never know, Dad, you better say some of these things. If anything ever happened, I'd like to be buried in the capital.' And I said, 'Yeah, yeah, right, when you're old and grey.'"

Albert Graham last spoke with his son on Friday, Sept. 1, the day before Operation Medusa's ground offensive began. Mark was scared.

"I don't share a lot of our last conversation with a lot of people. I will just say he knew what could have happened."

Saturday, Sept. 2

By Saturday morning, Charlie Company, the other supporting coalition forces and a limited number of Afghan National Army soldiers had rolled into position along the hillside south of the Arghandab River, facing the village of Pashmul.

The troops were stationed at a place called Ma'Sum Ghar — Ma'Sum is a person's name, and Ghar means a mountainside cave in the country's Pashto language.

Just below Ma'Sum Ghar were the distinctive walled grape fields of the district, set out roughly in 100-metre-square plots.

Inside the squares, there were rows of wide-based mud walls that stood chest high, with the grape vines planted firmly across the tops of the walls. Over time, the vines and roots held the walls together almost like the reinforcing steel bars inside concrete.

The grape field walls were one of the first obstacles that would have to be overcome before the assault could begin.

"They've been there for 50 years, they're hard as rock," said Sprague. "You can't drive through them, you can't jump over them because you've got the vines growing along the top."

The first step was to bulldoze a path through them so the troops would eventually be able to reach the riverbed.

From the troops' line on the hillside at Ma'Sum Ghar, it was about 400 metres down to the edge of the sprawling bed of the Arghandab River, which was almost a kilometre wide.

But the Arghandab was a river in name only. There was almost no water running through the bed, and what water there was in a couple of places could be easily crossed on foot.

On the north side of the riverbed were farmers' fields and the village of Pashmul.

"Because it's a riverbed, it's pretty much the only greenbelt, so it's the most densely populated areas over there," said Kinden. "When you get on the other side of the river, it's trees, plants, farms, you name it."

And huge fields of marijuana plants growing as tall as trees.

"Afghanistan's full of warlords and what I'd heard was that the warlords would pay the farmers to grow these crops and no one really bothered them," Kinden said. "You'd see big marijuana plants in people's front gardens. It's a different world."

By the time Operation Medusa began, Hiltz said, the plants were at least 10 feet tall.D12

From the far side of the river bed, it was about 400 metres through the fields to the first objective of Operation Medusa — the White Schoolhouse, a heavily fortified compound that was known to be held by the Taliban.

The Canadians would learn later — too late, as it turned out — that the compound was nearly impenetrable, and connected to nearby buildings with a series of tunnels.

"It quite literally was a very, very impressive defensive position and they could have easily waited out a long time in there and not been hurt," Hiltz said.

All through the day, Charlie Company pounded the White Schoolhouse with 25–mm cannons mounted on the LAVs, along with .60–calibre machine–gun fire.

The LAV ammo had no trouble reaching the White Schoolhouse about 1.6 kilometres away, and almost no fire was being returned at the Canadians.

Overhead, there was a constant parade of coalition aircraft raining 500–pound and 1,000–pound bombs on the Taliban positions on the north side of the river.

On the ground, Sergeant Jim Myler of St. John's, N.L., was Charlie Company's vital link with the aircraft above.

Myler was the forward air controller and he was responsible for directing the air strikes onto Taliban positions, including the White Schoolhouse.

Equipped with a telescope, radio, global positioning system and night vision equipment, Myler was tasked with delivering the bombing co–ordinates to the F–15s, F–16s, F–18s, A–10s and B–1 bombers that were at the disposal of the coalition's ground forces.

"Who wouldn't like it," Myler said of his job. "I get to go out, put a radio on my back and I control a multimillion–dollar aircraft.

"The pilot listens to all my commands, he's like my robot," Myler added with a laugh. "It's a huge responsibility, but a great one at the same time."

The aircraft travelled in pairs, and from the time they entered the airspace over Panjwaii, Myler's job was to guide them to the targets.

They'd communicate to each other using their radio call signs — Myler's handle was "Flare."

"One guy's throwing the business while the other guy's covering," explained Myler. "Those two would leave and two more would come."

The air strikes continued all Saturday and through the night.

"Planes, choppers, bombers, the whole nine yards were going all the time, so that was normal," said Kinden. "To hear the planes, it was like hearing the crickets at night: you don't pay any attention to them any more."

The plan was to soften up the enemy for a few days with constant long–range bombardment and air strikes. Through the day, a bulldozer and front–end loader plowed makeshift roads down to the river bed.

"The initial objective of why we took the hill was to assess the insurgency, see what the Taliban was doing there, and try to find their strong points," said Sprague. "At the end of that, we were to move across."

But at some point Saturday, the decision was made higher up the chain of command to begin the ground offensive at first light the next morning, after just one day of bombardment.

"I think because we had been bombing for the previous 18 hours and there was no resistance, I believe in my mind that someone was convinced there was nobody left there," said Myler. "I think the feeling was 'OK, they're all gone, let's get moving.'"

"There's a lot of people that have their issues with (the decision)," said Hiltz, 8 Platoon commander. "At the end of the day, we were given an order."

"It definitely wasn't fun."

For the first time since the Korean War more than half a century earlier, Canadian troops were going to launch a combat assault on a prepared enemy-held position.

"You could see it, a lot of the younger guys, they were apprehensive and it was something completely new to them," said Hiltz.

"They knew that once they were done shooting up there (on the hill), then the next step would be to go across."

"That was in the back of their minds."

Sunday, Sept. 3

At 0600, just minutes after sunrise, Operation Medusa's ground offensive began.

"We weren't supposed to leave until Tuesday, so this was much earlier than planned," said Sprague. "So we really didn't have much of a plan."

"We didn't really know what we were up against."

Charlie Company's 7 Platoon, 8 Platoon and 9 Platoon started their descent down the hillside at Ma'Sum Ghar to the Arghandab River bed below, reaching the bottom in just over an hour.

The LAVs were firing rounds from below while the air strikes continued on the White Schoolhouse from above.

None of the fire was being returned by the Taliban.

"It was very quiet," Hiltz said. "That's the whole thing, it was too quiet."

"Everybody sat there afterward and said, 'I knew something was wrong.'"

The three platoons then gathered in a flat, open field next to the riverbed that was surrounded by a berm. The heavy machinery was used to knock a couple of holes in the berm so that the LAVs could squeeze through.

On the other side of the berm was an irrigation ditch and then a field of marijuana.

The ditch was almost four metres wide and about two metres deep, so the first order of business was to fill in



part of the ditch to make a path across for the other vehicles.

Seven Platoon was to head directly toward the White Schoolhouse, with 8 Platoon providing protection from the side.

By 9 a.m., the three platoons were across the first ditch and into the field of marijuana plants.

"You couldn't see more than two feet in front of you in the field," said Sprague. "It was very bizarre."

Seven Platoon was within 50 metres of the White Schoolhouse when they reached a second ditch in the marijuana field. The plan was to once again plow a path across with the heavy equipment.

Suddenly, a red flare shot into the sky from the top of the White Schoolhouse. That was the signal.

"And then it was complete chaos all the way around," said Hiltz.

The Taliban had been patiently lying in wait and they unleashed a furious attack on the Canadians, who were trapped on three sides by the heavily armed insurgents.

Rocket-propelled grenades, machine-gun blasts, small arms fire and the deadly, powerful rounds from Chinese-made 82-mm recoilless rifles.

"They pack a bit of a kick to them," Sprague noted.

"They're actually more powerful than most of the weapon systems we have," Kinden added.

The very first rocket-propelled grenade was a direct hit on one of Charlie Company's Gelaendenwagen armoured vehicles — G-Wagons, for short.

Seven Platoon Warrant Officer Rick Nolan, a 39-year-old from Mount Pearl, N.L., was killed with the first shot of the battle.

The second shot was also a direct hit, taking out a LAV and killing 30-year-old Sergeant Shane Stachnik of Waskatenau, Alta.

"The G-Wagon that Warrant Nolan was in, that was about 20 feet off to my left so I saw that one hit," Sprague said. "I knew we had casualties there. The second one hit 20 metres to my front, so I knew we had two sets of casualties. These were direct hits.

"It's not like you see in a movie, where a rocket hits a vehicle and it explodes in a giant ball of flame. There's a puff of dark smoke and the vehicle stops."

Corporal Jordan Lobb, a 26-year-old from Dorchester, Ont., near London, was driving one of 8 Platoon's G-Wagons when the ambush started.

8 Platoon was to the left of 7 Platoon, providing coverage to the southwest flank.

"The very first two shots were kill shots," Lobb said. "I was terrified. I had a million things going through my mind because I knew someone got hurt."

Lobb saw the explosion when Nolan's G-Wagon was hit.

"I knew instantly that it had peeled it open like a can. It was terrible."D12

Sprague's first concern was to re-establish contact with the LAV that had been hit.

He learned later that both the LAV driver and the radio had been knocked out. When the driver came to, he managed to transport some of the injured back to the casualty collection point that had been set up in the open field behind the berms by the riverbed.

Chad Kinden and 7 Platoon were at the most forward point when the ambush began.

He was looking through the periscope viewports in the turret of his LAV and he clearly remembers his first thoughts.

"What's that? It's a fucking rocket," said Kinden.

"Once we came under contact, you saw no faces, you saw nothing," Kinden remembered. "All you saw were flashes and the movement of the marijuana plants.

"I can remember it ... I see it every day.

"That was the first time we had seen combat, so it was kind of like, catch your breath and let's get down to it now," said Kinden.

"It's all adrenalin. Three and a half hours went by in the snap of a finger."

Sprague, the company commander, was standing up in the hatch of his LAV, with his head sticking out so he could see above the marijuana plants.

Enemy fire was buzzing around his head. Sometimes, he said, he could feel the pressure waves from a passing rocket-propelled grenade (RPG).

"I don't know how close," he said. "Metres? Inches? Centimetres? Stuff was flying off the sides of vehicles, so I'm assuming some of it was pretty close."

Yet, he said, there was never any doubt that he'd be poking his head out the turret in the face of enemy fire.

"You can't worry about stuff coming back at you, you'd go nuts. You'd never do anything.

"I've got 300-some guys there. If I duck my head down and run away, I'm not really helping anybody. I'm probably causing more problems than I'm solving.

"If I'm going to expect my soldiers to stick their heads up and shoot, which I do, then I'd better be able to stick my head up and shoot. And if you're unwilling or unable to do those sorts of things, then you're probably in the wrong job."

Once the Taliban started firing, Hiltz, the 8 Platoon commander, grabbed his radio, jumped out of his LAV and ran up and down the lines through the marijuana field, trying to organize the troops.

"I remember seeing an RPG fly right over my head," Hiltz recalled. "If I hadn't stepped down in a ditch, it would have hit me in the face. It singed the top of my helmet.

"That was kind of a slow-motion thing I remember."

Because Hiltz was carrying a radio in the field, he was a running target for the Taliban.

"It was very obvious that they were trying to engage me," said Hiltz.

There's little emotion in his voice as he recounts in a matter-of-fact manner how bullets and rocket-propelled grenades flew past his head during the intense combat.

"I went over there expecting that kind of stuff," said Hiltz. "That's what we train for.

"Back in Canada, we do it with blanks. With this, if you make a mistake, you don't just get failed, you get killed. There's nothing I can do about that.

"It's luck, fate, God, whatever anyone wants to call it."

In the LAV next to Sprague, Myler got on his radio and began calling for air support.

"I said: 'Break, break, break, this is Flare, we're taking effective enemy fire. Are you able to come down and support us?'" Myler recalled, "And he said, 'Yeah, I can come in and support you.'"

Graham's LAV was positioned on the far left flank during the fire fight. As the driver, he was under orders to stay with his vehicle.

"He was probably sitting in his vehicle, listening to the radio and swearing," said Hiltz. "He was probably sitting there wishing he could be outside helping everybody."

"As you know, I'm here in Asscrackastan and currently writing you from my driver's hatch. We are currently in the midst of conducting our largest operation to date. We are being told it's the largest operation and objective taken by Canada since WWII. We have been conducting this operation for the past two days with a series of air and artillery ... FUCK wait out. We have been engaged!!! ... We are in a shit pot of hurt! 2X KIA!!

"I'll get back to you when I can. Who would have thought I would have picked this time to write to you!!"

— From Mark Graham's diary, Sept. 3, 2006

Back at the casualty collection point near the riverbed, the wounded were being tended to on the ground between the berm and the company's bulldozer, which was supposed to provide some protection from the enemy fire.

But a blast from one of the Taliban's 82-mm recoilless rifles sent shrapnel flying into the middle of the casualty area.

Warrant Officer Frank Mellish, 38, of Truro, N.S., and 21-year-old Private Will Cushley of Port Lambton, Ont., were killed as they tended to their wounded comrades behind the berm.

The decisive point came a couple of hours into the battle during one of the bombing runs.

A bomb intended for the White Schoolhouse lost its guidance system in mid-air, went off course, bounced on the ground without exploding and slid to a stop next to the Canadian front-line troops.

"So you can imagine that 20 feet to the right, you see a 500-pound bomb bounce off the ground and land beside you," said Sprague, the commander.

"I sort of said, 'OK, we're kind of screwed here,' because I don't know anything about bombs and the thing could go off in two minutes or two days or two years.

"I said to myself, 'OK, it's time to get out of here.'"

Sprague made the order to retreat but it was a time-consuming, painstaking process that took a few hours.

One of the G-Wagons, a LAV and the bulldozer ended up stuck in the irrigation ditch.

A couple of members of 8 Platoon had to jump out under fire and retrieve Nolan's body from the LAV that was stuck in the ditch. After about an hour spent trying to pull the three vehicles out of the ditch, the decision was made to abandon them.

A couple of A-10 planes were sent into the area and Myler spent the rest of the afternoon and the evening directing strikes at the White Schoolhouse and strafing runs across the marijuana fields.

After the Canadians completed their retreat, air strikes were called in to drop 1,000-pound bombs on the stranded vehicles so that they couldn't be retrieved by the Taliban.

The troops gathered in the riverbed, to take stock of the situation and allow choppers to take the wounded back to Kandahar.

The mood was sombre.

"It was real quiet," said Lobb. "I was outright crying. I was bawling.

"We wanted revenge, and we were sad for our friends."

By 3 p.m., Charlie Company had retreated back to its original position on the hillside at Ma'Sum Ghar, across the river from the White Schoolhouse.

"We all wanted to go back to (Kandahar)," said Kinden. "Sit back, not get shot at. They told us no, we're not going back.

"Yeah, we were pretty pissed."

"So the shit has stopped for now. We have pulled back off our original objective. And sure as shit we have our tails between our legs. We got hit and hit hard. 6X casualties and 4X KIA including two Warrants. One was Warrant Mellish, our Warrant. He was a great man. He is the one who inspired me to stay in the ranks and become a Warrant myself.

"Anyway, I'll write you in a bit. Command is figuring what we have to do. This is going to serve as a wake-up call for all those involved."

— From Mark Graham's diary, Sept. 3, 2006

## In the line of fire Part 2

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**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: Special to the Hamilton Spectator / Before mounting an assault on the Taliban stronghold called the White Schoolhouse, the Canadian troops had to bulldoze a path through this grape field, whose dried-mud walls were like concrete. ; Photo: Department of National Defence / At Kandahar Airfield Sept. 5, 2006, five flag-draped coffins were carried onto a C-130 Hercules. Some of the injured soldiers hobbled into the plane for a private farewell to their fallen comrades. ; Map : ; Photo: Mark Graham ; Photo: Mark Graham's eight-year-old daughter, Shae-Lynn, with her grandfather, Albert. 'Our planet sits on the edge of destruction,' Mark wrote in his diary, 'and only through unity will my daughter and her children have a future of peace and prosperity.' ;

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Monday, Sept. 4

At 0300, Jim Myler was back on duty as the forward air controller after a few hours of sleep, once again guiding planes through the inky darkness of the Arghandab River valley.

It was cold that morning, the coldest since Charlie Company had arrived in Afghanistan. For the first time, heaters were turned on in the LAVs.

Sunrise would arrive at 5:44 a.m., and at first light, the Canadians were going to take another run at the White Schoolhouse.

Except this time, it would be a feint. Charlie Company would make the Taliban think that another offensive was heading straight across the river, but instead, the platoons would swoop down from the north and catch the insurgents off guard.

In preparation for the assault, Myler was directing the bombing and strafing runs on the enemy targets.

He was working with pairs of U.S. air force

A-10A Thunderbolt fighter planes, nicknamed Warthogs.

The single-seat, twin-engine planes are designed to provide close air support because of their accurate weaponry and excellent ability to manoeuvre in tight spaces.

They can carry a mix of 500-pound and 2,000-pound bombs, but their most notable feature is a 30-mm GAU-8/A seven-barrel Gatling gun that sticks out of the nose of the plane like the tip of a cigar butt between clenched teeth.

Fifty bullets spit out in the first second in a distinctive burping sound, 70 every second thereafter. That's 10 revolutions of the spinning gun barrels each second.

"You cannot mistake the sound of that gun," said Lobb. "There is nothing in this world that is like that gun."

The American A-10s were part of the USAF's 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, which was located at the Bagram Air Force Base, near Kabul, about 500 kilometres northeast of Kandahar.

Once the pair of A-10s reached the airspace around Ma'Sum Ghar, Myler would recite the target co-ordinates to the pilots by radio.

Myler would give the pilots some of the target information, and the pilots, once they were within sight of the area, would feed back more info to him.

"It's give and take between the both of us," said Myler. "I give him some target description, but not all of it, because I need to save something for him to give back to me to be sure that he has the exact area."

To Myler, the pilots were faceless radio call signs flying above. In four months directing hundreds of aircraft during his Afghanistan tour, Myler only ever met two pilots.

The usual routine would have the A-10s fly in tandem over the target area.

The lead plane would drop a bomb, and the second plane would follow behind on a strafing run to pick off any enemy on the ground attempting to flee. Sometimes, the trailing plane was there to provide cover for the lead bomber.

By 0500, the soldiers of Charlie Company were awake and preparing for the new offensive.

The LAVs were all lined up in order, by platoon number, facing north toward the White Schoolhouse. At the back of the LAVs, protected from the enemy, the ramps were down as soldiers ate breakfast, chatted and packed up their kits.

Jeremy Hiltz, 8 Platoon commander, somehow remembers that he was eating strawberry Pop Tarts in the back of his LAV at the time.

"Mark came by and he said he was going to get warm by the fire and asked if anyone wanted to come," recalled Jordan Lobb, who was just a few metres away.

Each morning, it was standard procedure for Charlie Company to burn its garbage in a fire on the ground, and on this cold morning, Mark Graham took charge of the responsibility and started a fire just a few metres from the row of LAVs.

It was no surprise to Hiltz to see Graham standing next to the fire.

"He was the guy from Jamaica, the guy who was always cold," said Hiltz. "We always teased him about that. No matter what, he was always wearing extra clothes to try to stay warm."

At one end of the line of armoured vehicles, Myler was inside his LAV working the radio, juggling two pairs of A-10s that were making runs across the Arghandab River.

The sky was clear, and light was just beginning to spill over the horizon, but the valley below was still blanketed in the dark shadows cast by the Ma'Sum Ghar mountainside.

On the second-to-last bombing run of the morning, one of the A-10 pilots told his wingman that he had just removed his night vision goggles because of the increasing light.

That simple action would have fatal consequences.

For the final run of the morning, both pairs of A-10s were going to make passes over the target and then peel off for the flight back to Bagram.

Myler provided the co-ordinates and the four pilots were already aware that the enemy was on the north side of the river and friendly positions were stationed on the south side.

The first pair dropped a 500-pound bomb on the target, which detonated successfully with a puff of smoke and fire.

The second pair of A-10s were then going to follow, identify the target that had just been hit and then both trailing planes would strafe around it.

At 0524, the lead A-10 from the final pair came rumbling over the top of the mountains that ring the Ma'Sum Ghar area.

The plane was travelling from the southwest toward the northeast, straight into the growing light just before sunrise.

The transition period from night to day is the most difficult for pilots because their night vision goggles become ineffective. But once the goggles are removed, it also takes the pilot's eyes some time to adjust to the light. At the same time, the lighting of the cockpit instrumentation has to be adjusted.

Less than a minute had passed from the time the pilot removed his goggles until he made his final strafing run of the morning.

Ahead, the horizon was light but the river and valley below were washed out in darkness.

The pilot became disoriented and looked out his cockpit window, trying to identify the fire and smoke from the bomb that had detonated seconds earlier.

On the pilot's cockpit targeting pod, the correct co-ordinates for the White Schoolhouse were on display.

But the pilot ignored the display on his screen and looked out the cockpit window instead.

He saw the garbage fire at Charlie Company's position, mistakenly thought it was the White Schoolhouse bomb site, and pointed his plane in that direction.

Then he pulled the trigger.

One second.

Two seconds.

Three seconds.

Enough time for more than 200 rounds of high-explosive ammunition to rain down on Charlie Company, most of it in a line along the back of 8 Platoon's LAVs.

"If he had checked his (display)," the government inquiry concluded, "he would have noticed the discrepancy between where his plane was pointed and the real target.

"That discrepancy should have caused him to abort that attack."

A year later, Myler still can't understand how the pilot could have made such a mistake.

"I had just worked these airplanes for almost three hours and we had continuously hit the targets time and time again," said Myler, with a hint of frustration in his voice. "He's already dropped a couple of bombs, he's already strafed it. I know that he knows where it is.

"I really don't know what was going through the poor man's head."

It's been a heavy burden on Myler's shoulders, even though the government report concluded the pilot was solely responsible for the tragedy.

"There still isn't a day that I don't think about what went down," Myler said quietly, "still not a day passes that I don't think about Mark or the guys."

As soon as the A-10's burst rang out, Myler hit the deck and dropped his handset. After a few seconds, he realized what was happening and grabbed his radio.

"Abort! Abort! Abort!" he yelled to the A-10 pilots above.

Myler's quick actions probably saved the lives of dozens of Canadian soldiers.

The second A-10 was following about 30 seconds behind, preparing to unleash another strafe.

When the second pilot saw the lead plane strafing a target, he assumed that his own instruments were wrong and rejiggered his path to follow the same line toward Charlie Company.

"He was beginning to press the trigger as (Myler) yelled 'Abort, abort, abort,'" said Hiltz.

"If we didn't have him, there's probably a lot less of us who'd have come home."

At the same time, the lead pilot realized he'd made a horrible mistake and acknowledged the error over his radio. The two American pilots quickly radioed for medical assistance to come to the aid of Charlie Company.

On the ground, there were screams of panic and pain.

"They were making another pass and we didn't know if they knew that they shot the wrong target," said Lobb.

He had been standing next to his LAV, shirtless, boots undone, brushing his teeth, when the A-10 spat out its burst of ammo. He was just a couple of metres from the garbage fire at the time.

By the time the bursts were exploding, Lobb was already throwing himself to the ground.

He was hit by shrapnel in three places, including a piece on his spine, and immediately, he could feel boiling metal on his back and left leg.

"I knew my back was hit instantly because, like a reaction, I grabbed for it and my fingers fell right inside my back," said Lobb.



Matthew Sprague, the company commander, had just stepped out of his LAV at the time. He was going to toss a piece of paper into the garbage fire when the explosions rang out.

He knew instantly that the troops were being pelted with friendly fire.

"I knew right away from the sound exactly what it was," said Sprague. "It's quite amazing to see how devastating it is."

Sprague took shrapnel pieces to both sides of his head, his arm, his back and buttocks. The blasts knocked his glasses right off his face, and he was covered from head to toe in blood.

"The only way I can describe it is like someone put a whole bunch of blue sparklers in the air and starts beating the living bejesus out of you with a baseball bat," Sprague said.

Next to him, a medic had taken shrapnel in the shoulder. Sprague grabbed the medic's shoulder, the medic grabbed Sprague's head and the two of them tried to hold each other up awkwardly and crab-walk back to the LAV to find bandages.

Chad Kinden was in the back of his LAV when the A-10 fired.

"When we heard it in the LAV, we were like, 'Whoa, that was close, he must have fired right over our heads,'" Kinden said. "Then all of a sudden people are yelling and screaming, 'They're shooting at us, they're shooting at us.'"

Mark Graham was standing next to the fire, getting ready to extinguish it when a piece of shrapnel tore through his chest and pierced his aorta, the major artery that exits the heart.

He never had a chance.

Within a couple of seconds, two platoon mates were at his side, but there was nothing they could do to save him.

"I believe that when they found Mark, he was just taking his last breath," said Kinden.

After the initial panic, the scene turned quiet as the soldiers went about the business of tending to the injured.

"There were some guys there with some pretty bad injuries, and guys who'd probably never seen blood before in their lives took care of these boys," Kinden said.

About 30 seconds after the attack, Hiltz ran past the fire and checked quickly on Graham, who was stretched out flat on the ground.

"There was absolutely no response from him at all," said Hiltz. "Eventually we grabbed a blanket and put it over top of him, and later on we were able to move him."

Within minutes, a mass casualty call went out to the Kandahar airbase, and four choppers began making the 10-minute flight to Ma'Sum Ghar to take the wounded out.

By 0550, all medical staff had been called to duty at the Kandahar military hospital.

Sprague was placed on a stretcher and taken to Kandahar, where he was rushed into surgery because one of the shrapnel pieces had punctured his skull. After a CT scan, the pieces of shrapnel were removed.

"I got a couple of pieces of it, but right now, I don't where they are," he said. "They could have just found a couple of pieces of metal off the floor, for all I know."

Sprague was transferred to the U.S. military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, along with other severely wounded soldiers, and then sent back to Canada.

Lobb, too, was flown to Kandahar but it was overloaded with casualties, so he was sent on to the Dutch military base at Tarin Kowt.

Lobb was soon returned to Canada, his tour of duty over after just a month. He's still not healed and has surgery scheduled Sept. 19 for his leg.

After all of the wounded were removed, Graham's body was flown to Kandahar.

All together, 35 Canadian soldiers were injured in the friendly fire incident, 13 seriously enough that they were returned to Canada.

Coalition forces continued their offensive in the area of the White Schoolhouse for another two weeks, reducing the target almost to rubble. NATO indicated in published reports that more than 500 Taliban insurgents were killed during Operation Medusa.

A day after the tragedy, nearly 1,000 people gathered at Kandahar airbase for a solemn, tear-filled ceremony as five flag-draped coffins were carried on to a C-130 Hercules.

Some of Charlie Company's injured soldiers hobbled on crutches up the ramp into the plane, others were pushed in wheelchairs, so they could share a final, private moment with their fallen comrades.

The following day, Graham's body and the bodies of Mellish, Cushley, Nolan and Stachnik arrived back in Canada at CFB Trenton, Ont.

On Sept. 15, 2006, in accordance with his wishes, Mark Graham was buried in the National Military Cemetery in Ottawa. That was an easy choice, according to his mother, Linda.

"Mark was very proud of being in the army," she said. "He liked pomp and circumstance and the structure of the army.

"He would have liked all the fanfare that a military funeral provided for him."

FFF

A year has passed, but Mark Graham is certainly not forgotten.

An online condolence book in his memory contains hundreds of entries, including a couple of birthday best wishes in May, and new entries continue to trickle in.

Many of the entries are addressed directly to him, as if he's sitting at a computer somewhere on the other end.

There's a message from a Grade 10 student in Markham who learned about Graham as part of a Remembrance Day project in class.

There's one from Amy Rodgers of Streetsboro, Ohio. She's the sister of Traci Luther, Mark Graham's longtime girlfriend and the mother of his daughter, Shae-Lynn.

"It seems like just yesterday you were sitting in my living room with my husband happily singing all 23 verses of There's A Hole In My Bucket, Dear Liza, Dear Liza," Rodgers wrote. "Now, as I am writing this, there is a hole in my heart. I want to thank you for walking into my sister Traci's life."

There's one from Jeremy White of Hamilton, who says that Mark gave him his nickname, JBone, and one from Adam White of Petawawa, who says he was so inspired by Mark's favourite biblical verse that he had it tattooed on his arm.

It was Joshua 1:9. "Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

And on Jan. 13, there's a message from Daniel Graham, Mark's younger brother and "a man of few words," according to his father, Albert.

"Hey big brother Mark, I missed you soo much during Christmas," Daniel wrote. "I don't come to this site often, I can't really handle it. I know you're watching over me. Every day, I put on the same uniform you passed in and wear it with so much more pride."

Daniel is also in the army, part of a tank battalion stationed in Edmonton, and that weighs heavily on Albert Graham's mind.

He knows his youngest son wanted to be a soldier from the time he was a little boy, but Albert has lost one child already to the war.

So far, Daniel has not been deployed to Afghanistan, and "I do believe he's weighing his options, whether he wants to stay in the army," his father said.

"Personally, if he walked through that gate and said, 'I'm finished,' I would throw a party," said Albert Graham. "But that's his decision."

With the first anniversary of their son's death approaching, the Grahams are apprehensive. They expect some sleepless nights.

"But for the past 11 months, that's not very strange," Albert said. "There have been a lot of sleepless nights."

There will come a day when he'll finally be able to go through his son's belongings.

They were returned to him last year but still sit in boxes.

"I started one day and I couldn't," said Albert. "I put them back.

"I'm not ready for that yet."

FFF

"Look at the world we live in and think not of your neighbour down the street but think of your neighbour from another country. Think of their children and the plight they exist in each day. Remember this as we soldiers go and do our jobs. Remember that we go, even in the face of imminent danger, we go of our free will. Most with reason and purpose often tied to our homes, our love of country.

"Support us even in times of hardship. Without our nation's support, we have no heart, no purpose, no soul. We, the Canadian soldier."

— From Mark Graham's diary,

About the author

Steve Buist

Veteran investigative reporter Steve Buist is a two-time National Newspaper Award winner in the Investigations category. He was also part of a team nominated for an NNA earlier this year in the Politics category. Buist has also won seven Ontario Newspaper Association awards and in 2004, he was named the ONA Journalist of the Year. He can be reached at 905-526-3226 or by e-mail at [sbuist@thespec.com](mailto:sbuist@thespec.com).

May 2006

# Afghan police say Taliban hostage-taker killed

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**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** B2  
**COLUMN:** World Report  
**DATELINE:** KABUL  
**SOURCE:** Compiled from Star News Services  
**WORD COUNT:** 122

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KABUL — A senior Taliban commander involved in the abduction of 23 South Korean missionaries was among dozens of insurgents killed in clashes in southern Afghanistan overnight, police said on Tuesday.

Ali Shah Ahmadzai, police chief of Ghazni province, said Taliban commander Mullah Mateen was among 22 insurgents killed in a clash in the province's Qarabagh district.

"He was involved in the kidnapping. We have reconnaissance colleagues on the ground," Ahmadzai told Reuters by telephone from Ghazni.

However the U.S. military said it was not yet clear whether any hostage-takers were among "several" insurgents killed in Qarabagh.

It said a dozen militants had been killed in a separate battle in the southern province of Kandahar overnight, while officials said three policemen had been killed in two separate suicide blasts in the south on Tuesday.

# Throne speech due in Oct.; PM decides to prorogue Parliament and open new session

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**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** B1 / FRONT  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Stephen Harper;  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 385

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OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Tuesday pushed the country a step closer to a possible 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech — followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009.

So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements Tuesday how the Liberals and NDP will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP have been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said Tuesday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

He also wants Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It will take all three opposition parties together to bring down the government. Recent opinion polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House Leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.

"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was, 'what can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

In a brief written statement Tuesday, Harper made no mention of Afghanistan. He said he was proroguing Parliament in order to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

Whether he intends to precipitate an election fought over Afghanistan — or whether he simply wants to relaunch his government with a new throne speech — Harper's decision to prorogue has other benefits for the Conservatives.

It frees up legions of federal Tories to help their provincial counterparts campaign in the upcoming Oct. 10 Ontario election.

It also means, says Dion, that Harper and his cabinet will endure one less month of questioning and scrutiny by opposition members in the House.

# Emotional au revoir for Quebec's fallen heroes

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050035  
**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** A7  
**BYLINE:** Daniel Dubuc  
**SOURCE:** Windsor Star  
**WORD COUNT:** 287

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Last week was the 9th Quebec City International Festival of Military Bands. It was also the week three soldiers from Valcartier died in Afghanistan. Friday night was the first Tattoo night where all the bands were present at the Colisee. Eight hundred of them filled the stage (usually a hockey rink) for the opening of the show.

At one point Canadian bands filled half the stage. To everybody's surprise, the last regular Canadian troops preparing to leave for Afghanistan on Sunday marched in formation, in full combat gear, and stood at attention in front of the musicians. They received a seven-minute ovation.

The lights went dim and a brigadier general appeared. He walked toward them where a seven-year-old girl was already sitting on the floor. He first offered the Armed Forces condolences to the family of Mrs. Andree Boucher, mayor of Quebec City, who had died suddenly, earlier the same day. Mrs. Boucher was patron of the Royal 22nd Regiment. The general then had words for the three fallen soldiers and the departing troops. Emotions in the crowd were very high.

The little girl then read a farewell message to her father. The message, with its lovely illustrations, was displayed on a giant screen for everybody to see. People were deeply moved. But then a soldier broke rank and kneeled next to the little girl, took his helmet off, laid his rifle on the ground and took the girl in his arms. The crowd responded by applauding in tears. She then sang "Ce n'est qu'un au revoir"....

I had long heard that military protocol was something to be seen. Well this, you had to see.

Daniel Dubuc

Quebec City



## PM puts muzzle on press

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**PUBLICATION:** The Windsor Star  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial/Opinion  
**PAGE:** A7  
**COLUMN:** Barbara Yaffe  
**BYLINE:** Barbara Yaffe  
**SOURCE:** Vancouver Sun  
**WORD COUNT:** 523

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I will be refusing, for some time to come, to interview Prime Minister Stephen Harper. This gesture isn't going to change the world. It's not meant to; it's aimed only at making a point — the current government's media relations policy is anti-democratic.

It's paranoid and petty, too, but that's Harper's problem. He's free to determine his own communications strategy.

What's of concern is that the Conservatives' approach to the media has potential to be deleterious to the welfare of taxpayers. Because, for better or worse, it's primarily through media that ordinary people get information about government.

It's not news that this PM muzzles ministers and keeps an iron-clad grip on messaging.

It has been suggested that James Moore's perplexing inability to get into cabinet is traceable to his penchant for being chatty with media. Moore is the talented, bilingual MP for Port Moody-Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam.

That, again, is Harper's business. He's party leader and caucus boss.

This controversy, of course, first erupted in the spring of 2006. Little has been written on the topic since then because little has changed. Everyone, of necessity, has more or less accommodated to the Harper rules. But that doesn't mean they're deserving of acceptance.

The rules: When Parliament is in session, journalists are limited to brief statements from Harper as he enters and leaves the Commons.

When news conferences are held, the Prime Minister's Office decides which reporters may ask a question. Clearly, reporters who have a history of asking tough or inconvenient questions might never be called upon.

PMO news releases regularly specify that media availability is for photographers only, so that a photo can be taken of this or that event but no questions may be asked.

No longer can ministers be questioned as they leave cabinet meetings because journalists are barred from gathering outside the cabinet room.

Last year, Harper attempted to interfere with the media's ability to report on repatriation ceremonies of dead soldiers returning from Afghanistan. He was subsequently forced to reverse that position after a backlash from

the soldiers' families.

More recently, Harper had reporters barred from the lobby of Charlottetown's Delta Prince Edward Hotel, where Conservatives held a summer retreat. Journalists were directed to a government building across the road.

When Harper went on an Arctic tour a few weeks back, the PMO clashed with the Parliamentary Press Gallery about who could accompany him. Originally eight gallery members were to be allowed.

When the gallery sent its list of journalists to the PMO, Harper's staff dropped the number to five, advising it wanted only one reporter and four technical people along. After much ado, two reporters were permitted: one English, one French.

So, what's behind Harper's communications credo?

Clearly, the PM stands to benefit from having his government stay on message and not be caught off guard.

As a former press gallery member, I know journalists can learn lots through informal, impromptu exchanges with politicians. Thus, it's in the public interest for journalists to have broad access.

Not only is Harper's strategy anti-democratic, a poll last week reveals he's developing an image as "controlling." And his frosty rapport with reporters could backfire.

Peter Donolo was communications chief for Jean Chretien, who was a bully but never sought to manipulate the press to the degree Harper has.

"It's a bit like picking a fight with your mother-in-law," Donolo has warned. "It may feel great at the moment. But she's around for the long haul. She has a million ways of getting back at you, and making your life miserable. It's just not worth it."

Barbara Yaffe is a Vancouver Sun columnist. E-mail: [byaffe@png.canwest.com](mailto:byaffe@png.canwest.com).

# Harper decides to risk new throne speech Opposition parties could force election

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**PUBLICATION:** WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**PAGE:** A1

**SECTION:** Canada Wire

**WORD COUNT:** 367

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CNS Richard Foot OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Tuesday pushed the country a step closer to a possible 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech — followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009.

So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements Tuesday how the Liberals and NDP will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP have been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said Tuesday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

He also wants Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It will take all three opposition parties together to bring down the government. Recent opinion polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House Leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.

"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was, 'what can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start." In a brief written statement Tuesday, Harper made no mention of Afghanistan. He said he was proroguing Parliament in order to "launch the next phase of our mandate." "The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation," he said.



# Military denies fatal delay in response to Taliban attack

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050053  
**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** World  
**PAGE:** B6  
**BYLINE:** Mike Blanchfield  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 517

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The Canadian Forces are denying a published report suggesting they rejected a call for help by a remote Afghanistan police outpost that eventually lost 16 officers in a Taliban attack.

After Sunday's New York Times gave an account of the Aug. 7 incident, Kandahar's provincial police chief Syed Aqa Saqib paid a special visit to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, the Canadian commander in Afghanistan, because he "feels horribly" that the published report portrayed him as blaming Canadian troops for the deaths of 16 of his officers, said a senior military spokesperson.

"The provincial police chief has already been in to see Gen. Laroche because he's obviously concerned about how the article portrayed his comments," Lt.-Col. Jamie Robertson, a Defence Department spokesperson, said in an interview Tuesday.

"He went in to see him about it because it's not accurate at all."

Sahib said Canadian troops began withdrawing from police checkpoints in the Panjwaii district in early July, around the time of the rotation of Petawawa, Ont.-based soldiers out of country for the incoming Royal 22nd Regiment, or Van Doos, from Valcartier, Que.

That sparked a series of Taliban attacks on the unprotected outposts, Sahib told the Times, including the Aug. 7 incident in which he reportedly called on Canadian troops for help.

Robertson disputed the published account and said the besieged Afghan police originally called for assistance from the Afghan National Army, which later called on Canadian troops to assist. The Canadians responded as quickly as possible but by the time they arrived the attack had ended, and they were in no position to help, he said.

The incident underscored the urgency to train and equip Afghan police, and Canadian government officials announced Tuesday they planned to send more police officers and open a new training centre in Kandahar City.

As part of what was billed as a series of new and regular briefings on the mission in Afghanistan, government officials said 22 additional Canadian police officers would be joining a European Union training mission.

Canada will also be opening up its own police training centre in downtown Kandahar, next to where its provincial reconstruction team is located.

"We realize the formation of the Afghan National Police has lagged behind the formation of the Afghan National Army . . . we're working very hard to help them meet that challenge," said a senior government official.

Tuesday's briefing was an attempt to promote "progress" on the ground in Afghanistan, but it was upended by some well-documented setbacks there, including the renewed Taliban presence in the Panjwaii after Canada claimed to have routed them last year.

A report last week from the Brussels-based International Crisis Group on the state of policing in Afghanistan lamented the high levels of corruption and poor training within the Afghan police, describing it as "a source of fear, rather than community protection."

The report blamed not only the government of Hamid Karzai, but also the international community for its "short-sighted emphasis on quantity over quality" as a way of combating the growing Taliban insurgency.

Canadian officials stressed a number of times Tuesday that the key to bringing peace to Afghanistan was to train enough army and police personnel to be able to maintain law and order without the assistance of international troops.

"The challenges of a growing insurgency are pushing quick fixes to the fore," the ICG said.

# Harper ends parliamentary session; Move could trigger fall election

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**PUBLICATION:** The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** National  
**PAGE:** A11  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Colour Photo: Reuters / A new session of Parliament willbegin Oct. 16 ;  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 463

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"At the start, our approach was, 'What can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

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"The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation," he said. "We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election."

Whether he intends to precipitate an election fought over Afghanistan — or whether he simply wants to relaunch his government with a new throne speech — Harper's decision to prorogue has other benefits for the Conservatives.

It frees up legions of federal Tories to help their provincial counterparts campaign in the upcoming Ontario election.

It also means, says Dion, that Harper and his cabinet will endure one less month of questioning and scrutiny by opposition members in the House.

Among the pending legislation that will now die on the order paper is Bill C-30, the government's climate change law, which the Conservatives had been backing away from ever since a parliamentary committee tried in the spring to give it more teeth by including tougher regulations for industry.



# Downloading the war

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A10  
**COLUMN:** Susan Riley  
**BYLINE:** Susan Riley  
**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**WORD COUNT:** 855

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The "take-away point" from a high-level media briefing on Afghanistan yesterday — i.e., the story we journalists are expected to transmit — is that, according to senior government officials, Afghans are being successfully positioned to take responsibility for their own security and prosperity.

Whether this is true (there are conflicting reports, to say the least), this is the new tactic in a recalibrated public relations offensive from the Harper government. With new ministers in Defence, Foreign Affairs and CIDA, a new parliamentary session to begin Oct. 16, and continuing public skepticism about the war, particularly in vote-rich Quebec, the language has changed. No more dismissive accusations of "cutting and running." It is, increasingly, the Afghans' war — although we still seem to be running things.

For now. What we are asked to believe is that within an unspecified period — but presumably before February, 2009, when Canada's combat role in Kandahar is expected to end — the Afghan army and police will be capable of containing drug lords, terrorists and the Taliban in the south, while western-trained judges (including some women) preside over scrupulously fair trials, local villagers brainstorm about municipal improvements, Kabul bureaucrats apply the fine points of "legislative drafting" gleaned from their Canadian coaches and the human rights of prisoners in Afghan jails are respected. (There are plans for a "fair and transparent mechanism for approving senior appointments," too — something we should maybe try here.)

Not to be churlish, but it requires a huge leap of faith to accept that this attractive fiction is anywhere close to realistic, especially given media reports of Afghan army recruits showing up fitfully and out of uniform, or, just last week, of accidentally exchanging fire with their Canadian mentors.

If anything, the reputation of the Afghan police is worse (although Canada is funding a course in "mid-career professional skills development" for the notoriously corrupt local constabulary).

Adding to doubts that a poor, ethnically divided, war-torn and largely illiterate nation can transform itself, within a few decades, never mind a few months, into "a country secure and at peace with itself" (in the words of one briefer), come reports that last year's military advances are now in doubt. Military sources in Kandahar acknowledge that Quebec's Van Doos are fighting to secure territory supposedly won by their predecessors. There is "always back and forth," said Canada's ambassador in Kabul, Arif Lalani, who insists that Kandahar is noticeably more secure than it was a year ago. As for remaining pockets of Taliban resistance, ultimately that is a job for local police. "At the end of the day," said another official, "it is the Afghans who have to hold and maintain in the south."

On the controversial question of whether Canadian aid is getting to the impoverished, hungry and ill people it is intended for, officials came to the briefing armed with lists of small projects — wells, roads, schools,

immunization programs, all paid for with Canadian cash. These small successes, they complain, with some justice, are overshadowed, often by larger failings — including the deplorable state of Kandahar's largest hospital and reports of people starving very near the Kandahar airfield. One official said the UN's World Food Program would soon be delivering food within 500 metres of the Kandahar base — although officials later refused to say exactly who would be receiving the aid. That information will be given only to embedded reporters in Afghanistan, leading some to suspect the initiative has as much to do with feeding the media as with feeding the hungry.

For all that, helping Afghanistan police itself and run its own economy is a sensible course, both politically and morally. Unlike the Americans, who are also trying to disentangle themselves from Iraq, Canada has no imperial ambitions and no pecuniary interests in Afghanistan. Nor does anyone doubt the bravery of our Armed Forces or the sincerity of the diplomats and public servants who are working around the clock to help Afghanistan rebuild. As for the media, Ambassador Lalani suggested the public isn't getting "the full story" from us. But it is getting, from correspondents on the ground, as full a story as they are allowed to provide, in reports that have been almost universally respectful of Canada's military. Media from other NATO countries, along with the few aid workers still in the country, also tell stories that are often glaringly at odds with the official version.

If there is cynicism around this complex mission, it can be found at the top, among politicians and their emissaries. They insist their policies aren't flawed, just the delivery. The real story isn't getting out. Then they offer a political script that is neither plausible, nor backed by tangible evidence.

Susan Riley's column runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday. E-mail: [sriley@thecitizen.canwest.com](mailto:sriley@thecitizen.canwest.com)

# Our heroes

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050045  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A9  
**BYLINE:** Robin Blecker  
**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**WORD COUNT:** 250

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I found Janice Kennedy's column about Red Fridays quite compelling. One of her comments made me look up hero in my Canadian Oxford dictionary. Hero is defined as a person distinguished by courage, noble deeds, outstanding achievements. Our heroes, the Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, are not such because they died in battle, but because of the life they led. Kudos to the Ontario government for remembering what the definition of a hero is by naming Highway 401 as the "Highway of Heroes."

I also feel compelled to respond to her comments about this support being political. My husband has not yet deployed to Afghanistan. I only imagine the pain that the families of fallen heroes endure. Every time I see the flag at Canadian Forces Base Shilo lowered to half staff, I think of all who have lost their lives and what their families must still be feeling. God forbid, but if my hero lost his life, I would be comforted in seeing those red shirts every Friday.

I feel compelled to emphatically state that perhaps if people wore red shirts during the Vietnam War, those heroes who came home would not have been shunned the way they were. Does Ms. Kennedy want to repeat that particular history? We, who wear red every single Friday, do not. Citizens of Canada, keep wearing your warm, fuzzy red shirts!

Robin Blecker,

Wawanesa, Manitoba

# Liberate Afghans

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050044  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A9  
**BYLINE:** Douglas Cornish  
**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**WORD COUNT:** 332

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Janice Kennedy won't wear red on Fridays to support our troops because it's political. And because Ms. Kennedy doesn't believe that Canada should be in Afghanistan.

The bottom line is that Canadians should support their troops no matter where they are. Ms. Kennedy is a proud feminist, but she should realize that the mission in Afghanistan is really a war to liberate Afghan women so they can go to school and so they can realize their potential as free and modern women.

Canadians seldom (if ever) choose where they are going to fight or where they are going to keep the peace (peacekeepers also get killed), but Canadians should always choose to support their military. As the saying goes, every country has a choice of two armies: yours or somebody else's. A strong military is good not only domestically but also for helping others who desperately need help.

It's time to take off the rose-coloured glasses and face the truth. If Canadians were in the same position that Afghans are, wouldn't Canadians want them to help us out? It's not really about whether or not this war is justified, it's whether or not we want to help someone in desperate need. Or do we simply wish to turn our back, and comfortably, and smugly, say that it's their problem and not ours?

In this world of the new millennium, if women don't even have the right to education and to dress they way they want and think the way they want to, then the world hasn't moved very far from the caves.

Wearing red is just a symbol, a way of supporting those who risk their lives. It's not really about the "wear red" campaign, it's really about the human dignity of women in a faroff place, and a misguided group of men who wish to take their country back to the seventh century where women are chattel and possessions and less than human. Is that what we support?

Douglas Cornish,

Ottawa

# Questioning the mission is not disloyal to troops

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050041

**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen

**DATE:** 2007.09.05

**EDITION:** Final

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**PAGE:** A9

**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: CanWest News Service Photo / Readers reacted strongly to Janice Kennedy's column about the 'Support Our Troops' campaign of Red Fridays and special decals. Family members, above, of deceased Pte. Joel Vincent Wiebe participated in a Red Friday rally in Edmonton, last month. ;

**BYLINE:** Mark Blichert

**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen

**WORD COUNT:** 374

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Re: Why I won't wear red, Sept. 2.

Everyone who values the open debate and free exchange of ideas that are essential to real democracy owes a debt of gratitude to columnist Janice Kennedy for speaking out in a time when complex issues of foreign policy and national values have been dumbed down to pep-rally cheerleading and the denunciation of heretics.

I have felt a totally disheartening sense of déjà vu at the rise of a climate that deliberately clouds clear thinking and demonizes dissenting voices, a time of the most shamefully dishonest attacks on normal political debate.

Questioning any aspect of the current Afghanistan deployment, objectives, tactics, or the probability of success amounts to disloyalty to our service people who are risking their lives there.

Why déjà vu? I spent the late 1960s in the United States, and watched the proponents of the American involvement in Vietnam transform a complex set of political, military, and moral issues into a simple question of patriotism. The realization that the war in Vietnam was an unmitigated tragedy, an unwinnable quagmire, a moral and ethical disaster, and profoundly damaging to American interests, was delayed for years because questioning any aspect of the war was denounced as anti-American. Every effort was made to prevent any question or criticism by Americans of the war, long after the rest of the world had recognized it as a tragic folly.

Will we borrow this recipe for disaster from our American neighbours? Will we stifle debate by dumbing down complex questions and demonizing dissenters? What is the lesson that we should learn from the Americans' Vietnamese debacle? Surely it is not that foreign policy is best decided only by military leaders or that the best way to show support for the men and women serving in the Canadian Forces is to unquestioningly back any military intervention the government may favour.

Thank you, Janice Kennedy, for having the courage to step up and point out the cynically manipulative use of a sentiment that no one would contest (Who indeed does not support our troops?) to promote a foreign policy position whose proponents have done all they can to shield it from serious examination and legitimate debate.

Mark Blichert,

Ottawa

# Military denies it delayed help in Taliban attack; Critical New York Times report was wrong, police chief says

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**IDNUMBER** 200709050021  
**PUBLICATION:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A4  
**BYLINE:** Mike Blanchfield  
**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**WORD COUNT:** 397

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The Canadian Forces is denying a published report suggesting it rejected a call for help by a remote Afghanistan police outpost that eventually lost 16 officers in a Taliban attack.

After Sunday's New York Times gave an account of the Aug. 7 incident, Kandahar's provincial police chief, Syed Aqa Saqib, paid a special visit to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, the Canadian commander in Afghanistan, because he "feels horribly" that the published report portrayed him as blaming Canadian troops for the deaths of 16 of his officers, said a senior military spokesman.

"The provincial police chief has already been in to see Gen. Laroche because he's obviously concerned about how the article portrayed his comments," Lt.-Col. Jamie Robertson, a senior Defence Department spokesman, said in an interview yesterday.

"He went in to see him about it because it's not accurate at all."

Chief Sahib said Canadian troops began withdrawing from police checkpoints in the Panjwahi district in early July, around the time of the rotation of Petawawa-based soldiers out of country for the incoming Royal 22nd Regiment, or Van Doo, from Valcartier, Que.

That sparked a series of Taliban attacks on the unprotected outposts, Chief Sahib told the New York Times, including the Aug. 7 incident in which he reportedly called on Canadian troops for help.

Lt.-Col. Robertson disputed the published account and said that the besieged Afghan police originally called for assistance from the Afghan National Army, which later called on Canadian troops to assist. The Canadians responded as quickly as possible, but by the time they arrived, the attack had ended, and they were in no position to help, he said.

The incident underscored the urgency to train and equip Afghan police and Canadian government officials said yesterday they plan to send more police officers and open a new training centre in Kandahar City.

As part of what was billed as a series of new and regular briefings on the mission in Afghanistan, government officials announced 22 additional Canadian police officers would be joining a European Union training mission.

Canada will also be opening its own police training centre in Kandahar, next to its provincial reconstruction team.

Yesterday's briefing was an attempt to promote "progress" on the ground in Afghanistan, but it was upended by some well-documented setbacks there, including the renewed Taliban presence in the Panjwaii after Canada claimed to have routed them last year.

Three major news organizations, including CanWest News Service, were also prevented from asking questions when a 20-minute press conference was abruptly halted with no explanation.

To view a video report on the mission in Afghanistan, go to Today's Videos at [ottawacitizen.com](http://ottawacitizen.com)



# PM prorogues Parliament; new session to open Oct. 16; Move increases chance of fall election

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A3  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
**SOURCE:** The Ottawa Citizen  
**WORD COUNT:** 270

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper yesterday pushed the country a step closer to a 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009.

So far, Mr. Harper has said only that he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements yesterday how the Liberals and NDP will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP have for months been demanding an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal leader Stéphane Dion said yesterday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

He also wants Mr. Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It will take all three opposition parties together to bring down the government. Recent opinion polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.

"At the start," he said, "our approach was, 'what can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

# Forces lacks intelligence support; No resources to run overseas missions, report says

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**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
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The military command in charge of running the Afghanistan mission and all other overseas troop deployments is having difficulty providing the needed intelligence to support such operations, warns a Canadian Forces report obtained by the Citizen.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force Command "clearly suffers from a lack of intelligence capability," concludes the report prepared in January for the Chief of Defence staff Gen. Rick Hillier.

The report by two generals and an admiral, and requested by Gen. Hillier, provides a report card on the military's process to transform itself into a highly efficient and relevant organization for the future. Part of that transformation, announced 18 months ago, included the creation of four new commands, including the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command. CEFCOM, as it is called, oversees the Afghanistan mission and international operations.

But the report warns that the command does not have the resources to complete the intelligence preparation fundamental to the planning of an operation. It also lacks an around-the-clock intelligence capability in Ottawa.

"From the command's perspective, tactical level (sub-unit and unit) commanders are not receiving the timely and actionable intelligence products," the report adds.

"In conflicts such as Afghanistan, which are widely characterized as intelligence-driven and further described as the wars of company and platoon commanders, the provision of timely and actionable tactical intelligence must be viewed as an urgent and no-fail requirement," according to the document. "Issues related to the provision of timely and actionable intelligence to CEFCOM, and by extension, to deployed forces, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."

The senior officers credited CEFCOM with its handling of the Afghan mission, but also recommend that a common operations centre for three of the new commands be created to ensure more effective and efficient delivery of intelligence to those in the field.

The report also notes that another office, the Chief of Defence Intelligence, or CDI, has been providing good support to various organizations in the military, and that should improve in the future as more analysts are hired.

But it also warns that the "CDI cannot support two lines of operations with currently available assets; therefore, it is unable to meet the intelligence capability expectations of the Government."

The report recommends that the CDI's offices, located in a number of places throughout the Ottawa area, be consolidated into one facility.

Col. Stephen Christensen, the director of transformation co-ordination, said with so many different agencies involved in the intelligence field, there is a tendency for those organizations to protect the information they have obtained. He noted that the report recommends the creation of what is called a fusion capability and intelligence enhancement.

Gen. Hillier has been pushing for that capability, which is expected to end up as part of a new command centre in Ottawa that will marshal intelligence data from combat zones and from across the country.

Military officers privately say the general has been frustrated at the lack of immediate information from the battlefield in Afghanistan.

The \$64-million program to build the joint information and intelligence fusion capability would bring together large amounts of information, including video imagery, still photographs, map displays and other data as it is transmitted from various sources. In some cases, officers would be able to watch live imagery from unmanned aerial drones flying on missions in Afghanistan.

Sites are being considered across the country, but in all likelihood the capability would be located in Ottawa since the new commands it would serve are located there.

The military is also looking at the potential construction of a new building to house personnel from the various commands as well personnel and the computer infrastructure associated with the information fusion project. No estimates are available on what that might cost.

Canadian Forces Station Leitrim has been named as a top contender for the site of any new building because it is in a secure area and home to a branch of the military that already deals with gathering sensitive intelligence.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny, head of the Senate's defence committee, said the report is a warning sign that more financial resources need to be funnelled to the Canadian Forces. "If Gen. Hillier's transformation plan is going to work, then a whole lot more money will be needed," he said.

The Senate defence committee has recommended a significant boost to the defence budget. Mr. Kenny said that planning records used to support the Conservative's defence-capability strategy called for a best-case scenario of increasing the military budget to \$36 billion by 2025.

"That's simply not enough," he said. "We (the Senate committee) think they've got to be there by 2012 to do what they want to do."

The defence-capability study was prepared for the Harper government earlier this year, but has never been released publicly.

# Forces battles intelligence crisis; No resources to run overseas missions, report says

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The defence-capability study was prepared for the Harper government earlier this year, but has never been released publicly.

# PARLIAMENT ON HOLD TILL OCTOBER 16; Session Prorogued; MPs Get Extra Month Off Until Throne Speech

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**ILLUSTRATION:** Black & White Photo: / (See hardcopy for Photo Description);  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Richard Foot  
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**WORD COUNT:** 790

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OTTAWA – Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister, extended the summer break for MPs an extra month, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session on Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a Throne Speech — followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House Leader, said the government understands the risks of a Throne Speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.

"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was, 'What can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

In a brief written statement, Mr. Harper said he was proroguing Parliament in order to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation," he said. "We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election."

Mr. Harper's decision has some costs, and a number of benefits for the Conservatives.

It gives the government several more weeks to produce a new plan to relaunch itself, and hope to regain some of the momentum that slipped away in the spring. After a strong start the Tories seemed to lose their way, and endured weeks of attacks in the House of Commons.

The delay also frees up legions of federal Tories to help their provincial counterparts campaign in the upcoming Oct. 10 Ontario election, and could diminish Ottawa as a target for Liberal Premier Dalton

PARLIAMENT ON HOLD TILL OCTOBER 16; Session Prorogued; MPs Get Extra Month Off Until Throne S

Mc-Guinty.

However, it means the death of legislation Parliament has been working on for months.

Among the pending legislation that will now die on the order paper, the most politically charged is Bill C-30, the government's climate change law, which the Conservatives had been backing away from ever since a parliamentary committee altered many of its provisions, including tougher regulations for industry.

The Conservatives will also lose several bills they were still championing, including a number of Criminal Code amendments, one of which would have raised the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14.

Those bills will be delayed, but they can be reintroduced in the next session.

Current polls suggest it is unlikely the opposition parties would benefit much from an election, but party leaders have been issuing threats nonetheless.

Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a Throne Speech if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February, 2009.

It's less clear from their statements yesterday how the Liberals and NDP will vote.

The NDP have been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal leader Stephane Dion said yesterday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February, 2009, deadline.

He also wants Mr. Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

Mr. Harper has already pledged a vote in Parliament on the future of the Afghanistan mission, and the government has indicated to U.S. President George W. Bush and to NATO leaders that Canada's combat role is likely to end in 2009 as scheduled.

NDP leader Jack Layton said proroguing Parliament was no different from locking out employees from their workplace.

"Students have gone back to class. Working families are back from vacation. Why is Stephen Harper locking MPs out? Why is he stopping us from getting back to work for students and families?" Mr. Layton said. "The Prime Minister should be ashamed for shutting the doors of Parliament."

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#### ORDER PAPER DEATH TOLL

Major bills that have been passed by the Commons but not the Senate; with the exception of the last, they have died on the order paper as the result of the proroguing of Parliament:

C-10 -- to impose mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes C-22 -- to raise the age of consent for sexual activity to 16 C-33 -- to tighten the rules around foreign tax havens C-35-- makes it harder for those charged with gun crimes to get bail C-292 --a private member's bill that would require the government to

implement the 2005 Kelowna Accord, signed by the Paul Martin government and First Nations groups

Major Bills That Were Not Passed By The Commons And Have Died:

C-21-- to repeal the need for registration of non-restricted firearms C-30-- to update the Clean Air Act  
C-41-- to amend the Competition Act to give more power to the Competition Tribunal C-43-- to allow  
senators to be appointed from a provincial list, rather than at the exclusive prerogative of the Prime Minister  
C-44-- to provide matrimonial property rights to aboriginal women C-56-- to increase the number of seats  
in the House of Commons to 330 by 2014 from 308 S-4-- to impose fixed term limits for senators

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**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA



# Forces deny claim they rejected Afghan police; Chief 'Feels Horribly'

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**PAGE:** A4  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** Mike Blanchfield  
**SOURCE:** National Post  
**WORD COUNT:** 476

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OTTAWA – The Canadian Forces are denying a published report suggesting they rejected a call for help by a remote Afghanistan police outpost that eventually lost 16 officers in a Taliban attack.

After Sunday's New York Times gave an account of the Aug. 7 incident, Kandahar's provincial police chief Syed Aqa Saqib paid a special visit to Brigadier–General Guy Laroche, the Canadian commander in Afghanistan, because he "feels horribly" that the published report portrayed him as blaming Canadian troops for the deaths of 16 of his officers, said a senior military spokesman.

"The provincial police chief has already been in to see Gen. Laroche because he's obviously concerned about how the article portrayed his comments," said Lieutenant–Colonel Jamie Robertson, a senior Defence Department spokesman.

"He went in to see him about it because it's not accurate at all."

Chief Sahib said Canadian troops began withdrawing from police checkpoints in the Panjwai district in early July, around the time of the rotation of Petawawa–based soldiers out of country for the incoming Royal 22nd Regiment, or Vandoo, from Valcartier, Que.

That sparked a series of Taliban attacks on the unprotected outposts, Chief Sahib told the Times, including the Aug. 7 incident in which he reportedly asked Canadian troops for help.

Lieut.–Col. Robertson disputed the published account and said the besieged Afghan police originally called for assistance

from Afghan National Army, which later called on Canadian troops to assist. The Canadians responded as quickly as possible but by the time they arrived the attack had ended, and they were in no position to help, he said.

The incident underscored the urgency to train and equip Afghan police and Canadian government officials announced yesterday they planned to send more police officers and open a new training centre in Kandahar City.

As part of what was billed as a series of new and regular briefings on the mission in Afghanistan, government officials said 22 additional Canadian police officers would be joining a European Union training mission.

Canada will also be opening up its own police training centre in downtown Kandahar, next to where its provincial reconstruction team is located.

"We realize the formation of the Afghan National Police has lagged behind the formation of the Afghan National Army ... we're working very hard to help them meet that challenge," said a senior government official.

Yesterday's briefing was an attempt to promote "progress" on the ground in Afghanistan, but it was upended by some well-documented setbacks there, including the renewed Taliban presence in the Panjwahi after Canada claimed to have routed them last year.

Three major news organizations, including CanWest News Service, were also prevented from asking questions when a 20-minute press conference was halted with no explanation.

Canadian officials stressed a number of times yesterday that the key to bringing peace to Afghanistan was to train enough army and police personnel to be able to maintain law and order without the assistance of international troops.

"The challenges of a growing insurgency are pushing quick fixes to the fore," the International Crisis Group said.

The federal government has been under fire to provide regular briefings to Canadians about the Afghanistan mission, but has been reluctant to do so.

**KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM**

# THE FACES OF WAR

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**EDITION:** National

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**ILLUSTRATION:** Black & White Photo: Richard Johnson, National Post /PRIVATE KATELYN LORA  
CAMPAGNA (Meteorological Technician with the Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle)  
;

**SOURCE:** National Post

**WORD COUNT:** 147

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"The fact is, that our soldiers are out there in very dangerous situations, and we are here to support them, and to do everything we can to make sure they come back intact. It doesn't matter what I think of the mission, I will always support our troops."

"I've always loved Canada, but after being away and seeing what some other countries live like, I love it even more."

Campagna missed cooking her own food, silver cutlery, landscapes with colour, friends, family. When she got home she took a bath with every girlie thing she could find, ate McDonald's.

The National Post's Richard Johnson spent six weeks this summer chronicling the daily lives of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan in a very old-fashioned way: with pencil and sketch pad. Throughout the month of September, one of his portraits of a soldier will appear every weekday on Page A2.

# Military intelligence can't keep up: report; Command Of Afghan Mission 'Clearly Suffering'

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**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A1  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** David Pugliese  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**NOTE:** Assessing Afghanistan, Page A4  
**WORD COUNT:** 609

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OTTAWA – The military command in charge of running the Afghanistan mission and all other overseas troop deployments is having difficulty providing the needed intelligence to support such operations, warns a Canadian Forces report obtained by the Ottawa Citizen.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force Command "clearly suffers from a lack of intelligence capability," concludes the report prepared in January for the Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier.

The report, compiled by two generals and an admiral, was prepared for the Harper government this year but never released publicly.

It provides a status check on the military's transformation into an efficient and relevant organization for the future. Part of that change, announced 18 months ago, included the creation of four commands, including the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM), which oversees the Afghanistan mission and international operations.

But the report warns that the command does not have the resources to complete the intelligence preparation fundamental to the planning of an operation. It also lacks an around-the-clock intelligence capability in Ottawa.

"In conflicts such as Afghanistan, which are widely characterized as intelligence-driven and further described as the wars of company and platoon commanders, the provision of timely and actionable tactical intelligence must be viewed as an urgent and no-fail requirement," according to the document. "Issues related to the provision of timely and actionable intelligence to CEFCOM, and by extension, to deployed forces, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."

The senior officers recommend that a common operations centre for three of the new commands be created to ensure more effective and efficient delivery of intelligence to those in the field.

The report also notes that another office, the Chief of Defence Intelligence or CDI, has been providing good support to various organizations in the military and that should improve in the future as more analysts are hired.

But it also warns that the "CDI cannot support two lines of operations with currently available assets; therefore, it is unable to meet the intelligence capability expectations of the government."

The report recommends the consolidation of the CDI's offices into one facility, and also the creation of what is called a fusion capability and intelligence enhancement.

Gen. Hillier has been pushing for that capability, which is expected to end up as part of a new command centre in Ottawa that will marshal intelligence data from combat zones and from across the country.

Military officers privately say the general has been frustrated at the lack of immediate information from the battlefield in Afghanistan.

The \$64-million program to build the joint information and intelligence fusion capability would bring together large amounts of information, including video imagery, still photographs, map displays and other data as it is transmitted from various sources. In some cases, officers would be able to watch live imagery from unmanned aerial drones flying on missions in Afghanistan.

The military is also looking at the potential construction of a new building to house personnel from the various commands as well personnel and the computer infrastructure associated with the information fusion project. No estimates are available on what that might cost.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny, head of the Senate's defence committee, said the report is a warning sign that more financial resources need to be funnelled to the Canadian Forces. "If Gen. Hillier's transformation plan is going to work then a whole lot more money will be needed," he said.

The Senate defence committee has recommended a significant boost to the defence budget. Mr. Kenny noted that planning records used to support the Conservatives' defence capability strategy called for a best case scenario of increasing the military budget to \$36-billion by 2025.

"That's simply not enough," he said. "We [the Senate committee] think they've got to be there by 2012 to do what they want to do."

**KEYWORDS:** SECURITY; ESPIONAGE; TERRORISM

# Vote on Throne Speech will be test for Tories

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**PUBLICATION:** Montreal Gazette  
**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
**PAGE:** A17  
**COLUMN:** L. Ian MacDonald  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Photo: BRUNO TURCOTTE, CND COMBAT CAMERA / The Afghanistanwar will be a hot topic during new session of Parliament. Here, bodies of Canadian soldiers are ready for a ramp ceremony. ;  
**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA  
**BYLINE:** L. IAN MACDONALD  
**SOURCE:** Freelance  
**WORD COUNT:** 763

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It's official: Oct. 16 is the day of the Throne Speech, beginning a new session of the minority Parliament.

In setting the date for the new session late yesterday, Stephen Harper prorogued the first session, and with it all pending government bills, including the Clean Air Act, died on the order paper. Private members' bills get to live on in the new session.

The House, currently in summer recess, had been scheduled to resume in less than two weeks on Sept. 17. In delaying an extra month, Harper not only gets to set a new agenda, he gets a month without question period, a significant incentive in itself. His recently shuffled ministers, particularly Peter MacKay and Maxime Bernier at defence

and foreign affairs, will have another month to bone up on Afghanistan and other top files, without being exposed to the

drive-by shootings in the House, a place where a cabinet minister is never more than a single sentence away from oblivion.

Moreover, the Ontario election campaign will now unfold on its own merits, without the Conservative government or Harper being an issue, depriving the Ontario Liberals of the opportunity to depict him as the reincarnation of Mike Harris. Thus, the date for the speech From the Throne, not only after Thanksgiving on Oct. 8, but after the Ontario election on Oct. 10.

There is some grumbling in opposition ranks, particularly the NDP, that the House won't be resuming as previously scheduled. But that's just rhetoric and default positioning. After a year and a half, this Parliament has already outlasted the life of the average minority House. In other words, most observers expected an election by now. Even in a majority House, the average life of a parliamentary session is 18 months to two years, and this Parliament is on that threshold.

The benefits to Harper and the Conservatives are obvious – they get to set a new agenda, with a new message, one they'll be very happy to go into an election with, whenever that they may.

The most likely election date now seems to be October 2009, the date set in the fixed–election legislation adopted in the first session. But it could also come after next winter's budget, or even next month after the vote on the Throne Speech.

Throne Speeches come with benefits for sitting governments, but in minority Houses the vote on Throne Speech is no mere formality, but a real as opposed to ceremonial question of confidence.

For weeks now, the opposition parties, particularly the Bloc Québécois, have been sending signals about the price of doing business with them.

The Bloc, having propped up the Conservatives through one Throne Speech and two budgets, are now saying its support can no longer be taken for granted.

Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe wants to see at least two things in the speech – commitment to end our deployment in Kandahar as scheduled in February 2009, and limitations to the federal spending power.

Chances are good Duceppe will see both in the Throne Speech, and that should be enough to keep him onside. The Conservatives find Duceppe a very reliable guy to do business with – he has a definable bottom line, and he always delivers.

Jack Layton, who has a mathematical balance of power if he wants to use it, tends to be a bit more skittish when it comes to dealing with the Tories. It's hard to find his bottom line, and he understandably has problems in his caucus delivering a party of the left to a government on the right. His position going in is that that the old session should have continued. Now he needs new lines. Somehow, the NDP strategists have to do a better job of thinking their way down the field.

As for Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, it's hard to know what he thinks about anything from one week to the next. He wants the mission in Afghanistan ended in 2009, but then he says he wouldn't bring the government down over it. He wants a clear decision on this matter, but when he gets one, as he did from MacKay this week, he accuses the government of a hidden agenda. "How will they vote on their own vote?" he asked this week. "Why don't they say that today?" Huh?

Here's the most likely deal on Afghanistan: notice in the Throne Speech that we will fulfill our commitment to February 2009, but afterward rotate out of Kandahar, while remaining in the country. By then, in the name of burden sharing, it will be the turn of others to take the relief.

Dion wants a debate and a vote of his own on an opposition day, but before that, he'll have to decide how to vote on the Throne Speech. Welcome to the NHL.

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# Dion's war policy is hare-brained

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
**PAGE:** A16  
**KEYWORDS:** SEPARATISM; POLITICIANS; NATIONAL UNITY  
**SOURCE:** The Gazette  
**WORD COUNT:** 477

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"The Prime Minister must assure Canadians that our troops, including the Royal 22nd Regiment, will end their combat role in Korea by February 1953 under any circumstances," Opposition leader George Drew demanded yesterday. Drew denounced the 'irresponsible ... ambiguity' of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent ..."

– From The Gazette,

Sept. 2, 1951

Hard to imagine, isn't it? No wonder – it's fiction, made up to demonstrate a point. When soldiers are in combat, announcing they will knock off at a given time no matter what the state of the fight, like so many blue collars at the end of their shift, is absurd. It's a clear signal to the other side that mere persistence, and perhaps a little more killing, will guarantee victory.

Yet this hare-brained approach, we note with considerable dismay, has been adopted by the leader of the official opposition in Parliament, Stéphane Dion. He wants an ironclad guarantee that Canada's combat role will end by February 2009, he says, and with it he wants formal notice to our allies that we're outta there. If he doesn't get it, he claims, he might be prepared to defeat the government over the issue.

Is this merely a shoddy ploy to bolster Liberal chances in the Outremont by-election this month? Or is it serious Liberal policy? Either way, it's not worthy of Dion, a man we endorsed for his party leadership on the basis of his intellectual rigour and clarity.

This is not a question of "supporting our troops," that arch-banality of modern wartime. Nor is it about patriotism. Dion has proved his devotion to Canada far more clearly than most Canadians, and certainly everyone is entitled to be unhappy about the way our soldiers are being used at any particular time.

But this is not the way to express such concern. "Wars begin when you will," Machiavelli said, "but they do not end when you choose."

So what would be the impact of setting a rigid arbitrary deadline, as the Liberals propose? Is Dion merely hoping to pressure other NATO countries into making more of an effort? Does he even care what happens to Afghanistan?

Whatever he's trying to do, his posturing reminds us not of Machiavelli but of another strategist almost 2,000 years earlier. Sun Tzu said that in war, "supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." Canada's resistance to the Taliban's ruthless fanaticism seems, to judge by the Liberal position, to be at the breaking point.



No doubt the Taliban and their allies are aware NATO's biggest countries, except for the United States and Britain, have shown no stomach for sending troops to fight in Afghanistan. No doubt they're aware of the controversy and bitterness within NATO, not least in Canada. No doubt they're aware Canadians split 50–50 on the Afghan mission.

And no doubt they're hoping Dion gets the government locked into a rigid bail–out date. But we're hoping he fails.

# Dion's war policy is hare-brained

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**SECTION:** Editorial / Op-Ed  
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**KEYWORDS:** SEPARATISM; POLITICIANS; NATIONAL UNITY  
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## Forces deny fatal delay

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
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**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A10  
**KEYWORDS:** WAR; TERRORISM  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** MIKE BLANCHFIELD  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 138

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The Canadian Forces are denying a published report suggesting they rejected a call for help by a remote Afghanistan police outpost that eventually lost 16 officers in a Taliban attack.

Kandahar's provincial police chief Syed Aqa Saqib said Canadian troops began withdrawing from police checkpoints in the Panjwaii district in early July.

That sparked a series of Taliban attacks on unprotected outposts, Sahib told the New York Times, including the Aug. 7 incident in which he reportedly called on Canadian troops for help.

Lt.-Col. Jamie Robertson, a Defence Department spokesperson, disputed the published account and said the besieged Afghan police originally called for assistance from the Afghan National Army, which later called on Canadian troops to assist.

The Canadians responded as quickly as possible but by the time they arrived the attack had ended, and they were in no position to help, Robertson said.

# Military lacks intelligence capability: study; Leaked Forces report says Afghan mission suffers from deficient resources

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**SECTION:** News  
**PAGE:** A10  
**KEYWORDS:** SECURITY; ESPIONAGE; TERRORISM; CANADIANS  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** DAVID PUGLIESE  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 376

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The military command in charge of running the Afghanistan mission and all other overseas troop deployments is having difficulty providing the needed intelligence to support such operations, warns a Canadian Forces report obtained by the Ottawa Citizen.

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It provides a status check on the military's transformation into an efficient and relevant organization for the future. Part of that change, announced 18 months ago, included the creation of four new commands, including the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command

(CEFCOM), which oversees the Afghanistan mission and international operations.

But the report warns the command does not have the resources to complete the intelligence preparation fundamental to the planning of an operation. It also lacks an around-the-clock intelligence capability.

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"Issues related to the provision of timely and actionable intelligence to CEFCOM, and by extension, to deployed forces, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."

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The report also notes another office, the Chief of Defence Intelligence or CDI, has been providing good support to various organizations in the military and that should improve in the future as more analysts are hired.

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# PM parks Parliament for month; Stage set for election. Afghanistan issue could end up triggering non-confidence vote

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**DATE:** 2007.09.05  
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**SECTION:** News  
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**KEYWORDS:** POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA  
**DATELINE:** OTTAWA  
**BYLINE:** RICHARD FOOT  
**SOURCE:** CanWest News Service  
**WORD COUNT:** 639

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper yesterday pushed the country a step closer to a possible 2007 election, choosing to prorogue Parliament and open a new session Oct. 16, rather than resume the current session as scheduled on Sept. 16.

The one-month delay means Parliament must now reconvene with a throne speech – followed by a House of Commons vote of confidence on the speech in which the Conservative minority could be defeated, prompting a federal election.

Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe has said his caucus of 48 MPs would vote against a throne speech this fall if the government failed to make a clear statement in the speech that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 2009.

So far, Harper has only said he would seek a parliamentary consensus on a new role for Canadian forces beyond that date.

It's less clear from their statements yesterday how the Liberals and New Democratic Party will vote on the throne speech.

The NDP has been demanding for months an immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The Liberals say they want an end to Canada's combat mission in 2009.

Liberal leader Stéphane Dion said yesterday he wants a commitment in the speech that Canada will formally notify NATO of the February 2009 deadline.

Dion also wants Harper to unveil the wording of any motion to be voted on by MPs this fall on the mission's future.

It would take all three opposition parties to bring down the government. Recent polls have the Tories and Liberals in a virtual tie in voter support.

Peter Van Loan, the Conservative House leader, said the government understands the risks of a throne speech and is prepared for an election if one comes.

PM parks Parliament for month; Stage set for election. Afghanistan issue could end up triggering non-confidence vote

"As a minority government, we've obviously had to be ready to fight an election at any time, but it's our intention to continue to govern," he said.

"At the start, our approach was: 'What can we accomplish in a minority government in 18 months?' Now that we've accomplished our priorities, it's a good time for a new start."

In a written statement yesterday, Harper made no mention of Afghanistan. He said he was proroguing Parliament in order to "launch the next phase of our mandate."

"The first session of the 39th Parliament was exceptionally productive, especially for a government in a minority situation," he said. "We delivered on all the major commitments we made to Canadians during the 2006 election."

Whether or not he intends to precipitate an election over Afghanistan – or simply wants to relaunch his government with a new throne speech – Harper's decision to prorogue has other benefits for the Conservatives.

It frees up legions of federal Tories to help their provincial counterparts campaign in the coming Oct. 10 Ontario election.

It also means, Dion said, that Harper and his cabinet will endure one less month of questioning and scrutiny by opposition members in the House.

"It's unfortunate that Prime Minister Harper decided to prorogue the Parliament after failing to address issues such as climate change, Canada's mission in Afghanistan, or his record of broken promises on matters such as income trusts or equalization," Dion said, "(and) there are a number of important pieces of legislation that will be lost because of the prime minister's decision."

Among the pending legislation that will die on the order paper, the most politically charged is Bill C-30, the climate change law, which the Conservatives had been backing away from ever since a parliamentary committee tried in the spring to give it more teeth by including tougher regulations for industry.

The bills can be reintroduced in the next session.

NDP leader Jack Layton said proroguing Parliament was no different than locking out employees from their workplace.

"Students have gone back to class. Working families are back from vacation. Why is Stephen Harper locking MPs out? Why is he stopping us from getting back to work."

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#### Status of key legislation

Major bills that were passed by the Commons but not the Senate; with the exception of the last, they have died on the order paper:

C-10 – to impose mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes.

C-22 – to raise the age of consent for sexual activity to 16.

C-33 – to tighten the rules around foreign tax havens.



C-35 – makes it harder for those charged with gun crimes to get bail.

C-292 – a private member's bill that would require the government to implement the 2005 Kelowna Accord.

Major bills that were not passed

by the Commons and have died

on the order paper:

C-21 – to repeal the need for registration of non-restricted firearms.

C-30 – to update the Clean Air Act

C-41 – to amend the Competition Act to give more power to the Competition Tribunal.

C-43 – to allow senators to be

appointed from a provincial list.

C-44 – to provide matrimonial property rights to aboriginal women.

C-56 – to increase the number

of seats in the House of Commons to 330 by 2014 from 308.

S-4 – to impose fixed term limits for senators.

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