

Table of Contents

<u>Leadership vacuum at defence</u>	1
<u>Afghanistan; Cost of failure too high</u>	2
<u>CANADIAN MILITARY O'Connor speaks, Hillier contradicts</u>	4
<u>POLITICS: 'OTTAWA IS ALL OVER THE MAP' Minister's rift with general erodes support, PM warned</u>	6

Leadership vacuum at defence

IDNUMBER 200707310034
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.07.31
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: AA06
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 342

No one elected Gen. Rick Hillier or named him defence minister, but there was Canada's chief of defence staff last week announcing public policy as if that job has fallen to the military by now.

"We're not in the business of creating new reserve units," Hillier told the CBC. "We have sufficient units ... We don't need new units."

The general is right, of course. The federal Conservatives were on the wrong track when they pledged during the last election campaign to create 14 regional defence battalions of 100 regular soldiers and 400 reservists who would respond to emergencies such as floods or ice storms.

While they later modified that to make these all-reserve units because the regulars were needed for the Afghanistan commitment, it still made no sense to create new units with reservists waiting around for storms while the regular forces serving abroad needed all the support they could get.

What Hillier plans to do is to create seven regional units by juggling the current reserves, to provide an approximation of what the government had promised.

The problem isn't with the general's plan but in the fact that it was Hillier, not increasingly weak-looking Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, who made the announcement. It's the job of the military leader to advise the publicly accountable civilian leader on the proper course of action, with the policy decisions to be made by cabinet.

It's certainly the case that Hillier is a most personable man, whose blunt talk and political savvy are in utter contrast to the dour O'Connor, whose performance on the job has been inept at best and a disaster at worst.

The longer Prime Minister Stephen Harper keeps him in the job, the more it appears that the hapless O'Connor is out of touch.

His incredible pronouncement about the readiness of the Afghan army to take over the duties of Canadians within six months says it all about the credibility he wields not only with intelligent Canadians but with the troops nominally under his direction.

His tenure needs to end, with his replacement being someone able to rein in the enthusiastic Hillier and ensure that he understands the concept of civilian control.

This is an edited version of an editorial yesterday in the Saskatoon StarPhoenix.

Afghanistan; Cost of failure too high

IDNUMBER 200707310094
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.07.31
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: A6
SOURCE: Windsor Star
WORD COUNT: 634

Prime Minister Stephen Harper said less than a year ago he was willing to risk political defeat rather than let narrow partisan interests prevent him from doing right by Canada's soldiers and their allies in Afghanistan.

Harper insisted Canada wouldn't "cut and run" and would stay "until the job is done," but now, in the face of sagging public support, he appears to be equivocating. Finishing the job doesn't seem as important now as winning re-election and fulfilling, in the narrowest sense, the obligations Canada made to its NATO allies.

Harper now says he has no plans to prolong Canada's mission beyond its February 2009 commitment without a "reasonable degree" of parliamentary support. All three opposition parties oppose an extension of Canada's combat role in Kandahar, meaning majority support is unlikely. But what constitutes a "reasonable degree?"

Harper has a responsibility --- to Canadians and our soldiers, not to mention the Afghan people and our NATO allies --- to be clearer than this on this most crucial of questions. Does he support the continuation of combat operations in the restive south if the stubborn insurgency still hasn't been eradicated at that point?

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor has maintained Canada will be able to scale back combat operations by the end of the year as additional responsibilities are given to the developing Afghan army. This is the ultimate goal of the mission --- to lay the foundation so Afghanistan can function and prosper once we leave --- but O'Connor is being criticized, rightly, for being overly optimistic and naive.

Canada's top soldier, Gen. Rick Hillier, said "it's going to take a long while" before the Afghan army can stand on its own and he is joined in that assessment by Lt.-Gen. Michel Gauthier, commander of all Canadian expeditionary forces overseas: "Nobody's under any illusion that Afghanistan will be self-sustaining and self-sufficient by February '09."

The apparent softening of Harper's stance is fuelled not just by public opinion but the sense that Canada, which has now lost 66 soldiers and one diplomat in Afghanistan, is paying a heavier price than other NATO allies. Britain and the U.S. are pulling their weight but many countries in the 37-member alliance are not. Some nations have caveats preventing their soldiers from leaving the base and others are stationed in relatively safe areas of the country.

Harper has called for a more equitable burden sharing in the dangerous regions of Afghanistan and he is justified in doing so. But he needs to be clear with Canadians on what will happen if other countries, like Germany and France, do not emerge to fill Canada's place in the line. Will Canada withdraw and risk all the gains it has made in Kandahar so far or will it continue paying a heavy price to remain a key player in the war against terrorism?

Another problem for Harper and this country as it confronts the Afghan question is that the definition of success is nebulous so far as that war-torn country is concerned. The goal is the creation of a self-sufficient

and stable Afghanistan that will never again become a staging ground for international terrorism.

It will be difficult if not impossible to determine when such a victory has been achieved. Success, in that sense, can only be measured in decades and generations as the country develops and grows. The decisions Canada makes about Afghanistan must be viewed through that long-term lens and grounded on the principle that Afghanistan is a key front in the war against terrorism.

The stakes are too high and the cost of failure too dear to make judgments based on the short-term political considerations of a minority government. History is being made. Harper used to understand that. Perhaps it's time he reviewed his old speeches.

CANADIAN MILITARY O'Connor speaks, Hillier contradicts

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072120148

DATE: 2007.07.31

PAGE: A12

BYLINE:

SECTION: Editorial

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 505

WORD COUNT: 502

Even the lowest-ranking soldier understands that an army cannot function properly without discipline. But in the midst of Canada's most important mission in a half-century, this principle appears to have been forgotten at the highest level of the military. And while Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor bears much of the blame for this state of affairs, ultimate responsibility rests with Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Mr. O'Connor and Rick Hillier, Chief of the Defence Staff, have long had an uneasy relationship. But recently it has reached an untenable level of dysfunction, as evidenced by a bizarre public disagreement over the future of Canadian troops in Afghanistan.

On July 22, Mr. O'Connor appeared on CTV's Question Period to paint a rosy picture of the mission's progress. By the end of this year, he suggested, Afghanistan's army may be ready to allow Canadian front-line efforts to be scaled back. At the time, his comments seemed out of step with the more common analysis that Afghanistan's army has a long way to go. Sure enough, a week later General Hillier appeared on the same program to contradict Mr. O'Connor. "It's going to take a long while," he said of preparing Afghan troops to take over. "We've just started the process." It has been increasingly obvious throughout his tenure as defence minister that Mr. O'Connor is in over his head. But, embarrassing though it may be for him, it reflects even more badly on Mr. Harper.

For months, the Prime Minister has stood by as Mr. O'Connor has repeatedly been humiliated – not only by Gen. Hillier's repeated contradictions of his public statements, but also by his incompetence in handling the controversy over the treatment of Afghan detainees.

No doubt concerned that replacing Mr. O'Connor would shake public faith in the Afghan mission, Mr. Harper has refused to acknowledge his obvious mistake in appointing Mr. O'Connor to his position.

Meanwhile, his responses to Mr. O'Connor's critics have grown increasingly ludicrous, with the Prime Minister going so far as to suggest this past spring that the minister was beyond criticism because, unlike opposition MPs, he once served in the army.

No military can function properly without strong civilian oversight.

But with every day that Mr. Harper leaves his overmatched minister in the job, we are moving closer to that scenario. Gen. Hillier, more than Mr. O'Connor, now appears to speak for Canada's defence policy. Disturbing as this may be when it comes to public statements, it is all the more so if he is also steamrolling Mr.

O'Connor behind closed doors.

It is not Gen. Hillier's fault that he effectively has nobody to answer to. But if Mr. Harper does not replace Mr. O'Connor, his only option will be to rein in Gen. Hillier himself. Better he should appoint a minister who commands the respect of the Chief of the Defence Staff and all other Canadian soldiers.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

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

PERSONAL NAME: Gordon O'Connor; Stephen Harper; Rick Hillier

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

POLITICS: 'OTTAWA IS ALL OVER THE MAP'

Minister's rift with general erodes support, PM warned

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072120140

DATE: 2007.07.31

PAGE: A1

BYLINE: ALAN FREEMAN AND JANE TABER

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 765

WORD COUNT: 787

ALAN FREEMAN AND JANE TABER With a report from Brian Laghi OTTAWA Prime Minister Stephen Harper was warned yesterday that the rhetorical duelling between Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor and his chief soldier, General Rick Hillier, threatens to undermine already waning political support for the Afghanistan mission.

"Afghanistan has got to be very high on the list of problems he [Mr. Harper] has to fix," said David Bercuson, director of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary, as the Tories prepare for a caucus in Charlottetown this week to plot their fall political agenda.

Mr. Bercuson and other military and political experts said that there are too many voices speaking out on the Afghan military mission.

"The public is getting the perception that Ottawa is all over the map on this issue, and this isn't the way to manage a war," he said in an interview. "He has to improve the unity of the message of his people, find someone who will be the chief spokesperson or change out the Minister of Defence." Even one of Mr. Harper's close friends, former chief of staff Tom Flanagan, said he didn't think the situation could continue for "very long." "It strikes me as unusual to have the minister and the chief of the defence staff saying different things," said Mr. Flanagan, a professor at the University of Calgary.

"All I can say is that it looks odd. It makes you wonder what's going on." But two senior Tories said yesterday they believe the timing is wrong for a cabinet shuffle and that it's not the Prime Minister's style to make a move when his back is against the wall.

"The PM is not going to make a move when it's [the O'Connor/Hillier rift] in the news," said one official. "He'll sort of take stock over the summer and figure out what he wants to do." Over the weekend, Gen. Hillier once again seemed to take a different tack from Mr. O'Connor, insisting that it will take "a long while" until the Afghan National Army is ready to carry on the fighting against the Taliban now in the hands of Canadians and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces. A week ago, Mr. O'Connor had made a more optimistic forecast about the shifting of responsibility from Canadian troops.

The two men, who are not known to have particularly good personal chemistry, have frequently expressed different views on issues since the Tories took power 18 months ago. Just last week in a CBC interview, Gen. Hillier dismissed the idea of establishing new territorial defence battalions in Canada's big cities, a key

element of the O'Connor–authored Tory defence platform in the past election, saying the last thing the Forces needed was new reserve units.

Wesley Wark, associate professor of history at the University of Toronto, said Mr. Harper must stop the public bickering.

"I don't think you can continue to tolerate distinct and publicly expressed differences between the CDS and the Minister of National Defence for too long," he said. "Either the Prime Minister has to adjudicate or one of them has to go." Mr. Wark said that one problem is knowing exactly if and when Gen. Hillier is stepping over the line and getting involved in political affairs that are outside his purview. "The line is not clear," he said. Unlike in the United States, where politicians have clashed with the likes of General Douglas MacArthur, Canada has little such experience.

"The line can be crossed in both ways," said Terry Liston, a retired major–general and frequent commentator on military affairs. "The minister is not the commander in chief of the Armed Forces. The minister establishes policy but he does not direct the troops." "You can have a chief of defence staff who gets too political but you can also have a minister who micro–manages," he said.

The problem is exaggerated in the current coupling of the gaffe–prone Mr. O'Connor, a former brigadier–general and Gen. Hillier, whose straightforward manner and gift of the gab makes him ideal TV material.

"We have a minister that knows the military too well and who therefore knows all details, and we have a CDS who is very confident of himself and very much at ease politically," Mr. Liston said, noting that the result is that each tends to "get in each other's way." A senior Prime Minister's Office official said that "Gen. Hillier has and will continue to provide important comment on operational issues, which is his purview."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; foreign policy; defence

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper; Gordon O'Connor; Rick Hillier

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

POLITICS: 'OTTAWA IS ALL OVER THE MAP' Minister's rift with general erodes support, PM warnēd