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## Crew's safe, but our best tank is totalled

Destroyed by roadside bomb. Canadian officer thanks German officials for the loan, saying vehicle did its job

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Afghan insurgents knocked out one of Canada's new Leopard tanks, sparking questions in the military about whether the attack was simply lucky or a signal that enemy forces intend to target the armoured vehicles by increasing the amount of explosives used against them.

The Leopard 2A6M, on loan from Germany and outfitted with additional armour and protection to deal with landmines, was damaged beyond repair in an explosion last month. Military investigators believe the blast was caused by a landmine, but there have been suggestions that an improvised explosive device was used.

At the time of the incident the Canadian Forces stated a crew member was injured in the explosion but did not give details about damage to the vehicle. Members of Canada's tank community now privately confirm the Leopard is a writeoff.

But officers are also praising the capabilities of the new tank, saying it did its job in protecting the crew.

Only one crew member, the driver, was injured. He suffered a broken hip.

Some in the Canadian Forces believe the insurgents will try to focus more attacks on the Leopards because they are seen as highly effective in supporting coalition efforts. Insurgents in Iraq have targeted U.S. tanks with roadside bombs packed with explosives.

Afghan insurgents have already tried "swarming tactics" on the Leopards, firing large volleys of rocket-propelled grenades at the vehicles. In one incident, a Leopard was hit by four RPGs but emerged unscathed. Military officials have continually stated any vehicle can be destroyed if enough explosives are used in a roadside bomb or landmine.

In Afghanistan, Canada has a mix of older Leopard tanks and the 2A6Ms obtained from Germany.

Asked if insurgents are increasing the amount of explosives in their bombs to deal with heavier armoured vehicles like the Leopards, military spokesperson Lt. Isabelle Riche responded experience has shown the Taliban continually adjust tactics in an attempt to achieve greater result.

She said the Canadian Forces constantly assesses how these tactics can be countered to minimize risk to military personnel.

The military declined to get into details about the damage for operational security reasons. Some officers have suggested the insurgents already knew they had successfully knocked out the tank, since their spies monitored the recovery of the vehicle.

The German media has quoted a letter sent to German defence officials from a Canadian officer who was in the Leopard at the time of the blast. He thanked the Germans, noting the tank "worked as it should."

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