

## Recommendations to the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan



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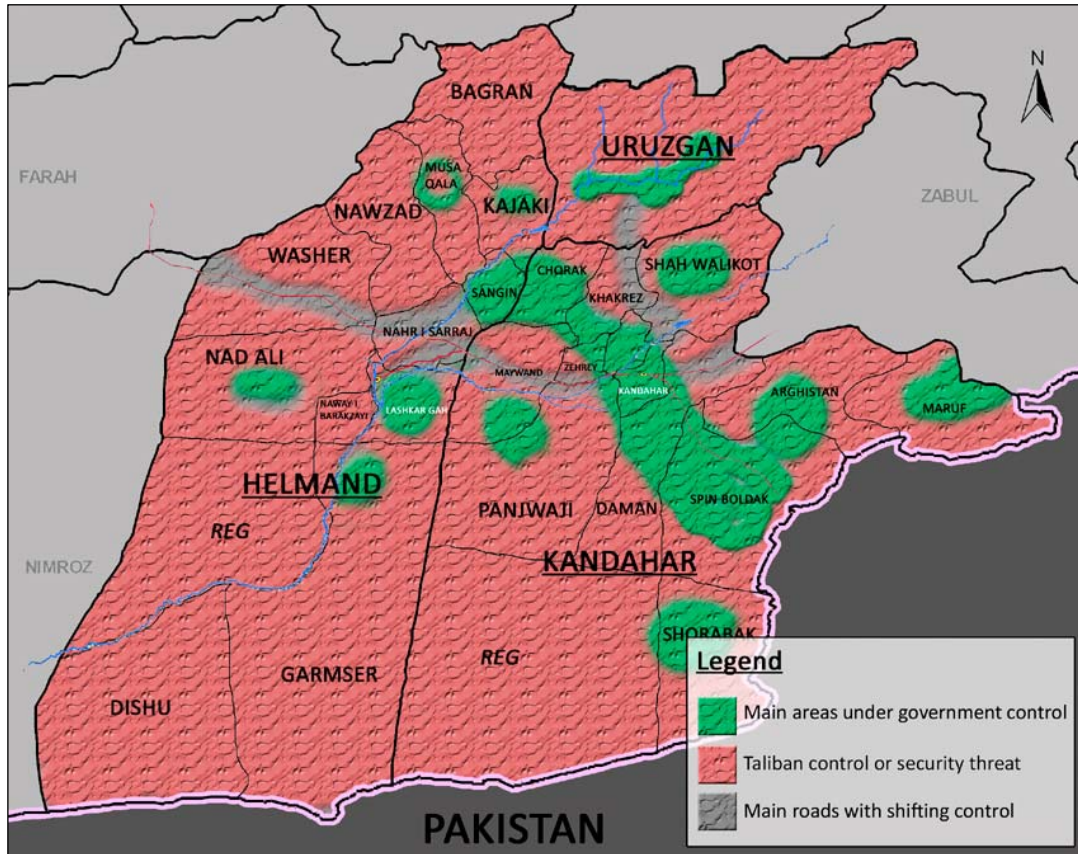
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*1 December 2007*

## 1. Our assessment of the current situation

The Taliban insurgency now controls vast swaths of unchallenged territory including rural areas, border areas, some district centres, and important road arteries. The security situation is such that military convoys are only able to operate in the surroundings of towns and military bases. Humanitarian aid is functionally nonexistent.



The *Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan* was asked to investigate different options for Canada's future policy towards Afghanistan, including the option of troop withdrawal. In this submission, **The Senlis Council would like to argue that withdrawal is not an option. Leaving the country would be a national tragedy for both Afghanistan and Canada. Instead, with its key role on Afghanistan, Canada should take leadership on the international stage. It should exert a leadership role within NATO to increase both military involvement in Afghanistan, and humanitarian aid and development efforts.**

**Canada can and should accept this challenge.** Throughout the past six years of Canada's presence in Afghanistan, Canadian forces have done a brave job under extreme circumstances and should be commended for this. Nevertheless, Canada has been unable to maximise its impact on Afghanistan's reconstruction and development process. Nevertheless, Canada's substantial investment and sacrifices – currently 74 mission fatalities and many more injured – deserve **a new strategic approach** that will effectively foster stability, reconstruction and development in Afghanistan. Canada must establish clear objectives and corresponding measures of success for its humanitarian, development and military mission and fully commit to those objectives.

**The United States has so far dominated the design and implementation of international policies in Afghanistan.** The situation in southern Afghanistan has deteriorated significantly over the past two years. There is currently more fighting and more insurgency activities involving unprecedented use of suicide bombers and roadside bombs. Internally Displaced People's camps have sprung up in and around Kandahar since the summer of 2006. Some are now controlled by the Taliban, and in others, people have been forced to move on because of the fighting. Kandahar is of the utmost strategic importance to Afghanistan and the entire region. The future of Kandahar will to a large extent determine the future of Afghanistan.

**Failure in Afghanistan would strengthen extremism in the region, with dire consequences and would again give the Taliban and Al Qaeda a geo-political home.** As Afghanistan represents a clear national defence issue for Canada, it is time for Canada to show maturity. There is an urgent need for new and innovative approaches that build the collaborative relationships with the Afghans necessary to enable reconstruction and development projects to be effective and to drive a wedge between the core Taliban insurgency and the Afghan population.

**Building collaborative relationships and winning the hearts and minds of the local population starts with accommodating the immediate humanitarian aid and short-term development needs of the people.** Supporting the Afghan government in building a better life for the population is a key role for Canada, yet Canada has failed to significantly impact on the humanitarian situation in Kandahar. The local population is increasingly doubtful of the ability of the Afghan Government to meet its security and basic social needs. Critically, the Taliban are capitalising upon growing public disillusionment with the Afghan Government and the international community. However, with a new strategic approach to the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, Canada will be able to bring a winning strategy, one that can be truly effective in both its military objectives and its reconstruction and development agenda.



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## 2. Our response to the Panel's four non-exclusive options

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### Option 1: Training the Afghan security forces and a phased withdrawal of troops



**Training Afghan security forces:** When it comes to providing security to Kandahar Province on the longer term, it is essential to train, support and develop the Afghan security forces. This should be a core task for the Canadian military. Moreover, the Afghan military currently has a structural shortage of uniforms, ammunition and other essential equipment. They also do not receive their salaries on time, obviously a critical issue in effective military development. As they do for the Police in Kandahar, Canadian military mentors should distribute Afghan troops' salaries.



**Phased withdrawal:** It is very doubtful the phased withdrawal of Canadian troops can start as early as February 2009 without this being tantamount to an abandonment of the Karzai Government and the people of Kandahar Province. Given that currently the security situation is worsening and that development efforts are at a standstill, a longer commitment of Canadian forces is critical, with sufficient troop numbers that allow both targeted counter-insurgency operations and a military role in humanitarian and development aid.

### Option 2: Focusing on development and governance in Kandahar



**No other (inter)national troops available:** Despite the fact that more international and Afghan troops are needed in Kandahar Province, these are currently not available. In neighbouring Uruzgan Province the Netherlands have just been asked to extend their mission as other countries are not available to replace the Dutch troops after the initial mission end date of August 2008. The situation in Kandahar will not be much different as many NATO and non-NATO countries are showing very little political will to assist ISAF in the troublesome southern parts of the country. That means that Canada cannot focus on a purely non-military role in Kandahar in the coming years. However, Canada should further shift its military policy towards aid and short-term development efforts focusing more on "Quick Impact Projects": targeting basic needs and involving the local community in project design and implementation.



**The military should deliver aid:** Current available food supplies are not getting through to the people in need. Aside from the deteriorating security situation, there are simply not enough local and international aid organisations in Kandahar to implement Canadian development programmes. This means that in Kandahar the military is the only actor with the capacity to secure the coordination and delivery of food aid and other forms of humanitarian assistance. **In general, the Canadian Government should make sure there is a dramatic increase in funding for humanitarian aid and development projects.**

**Option 3: Shift the focus of the Canadian mission to another region of Afghanistan**

Re-focusing the Canadian mission in Afghanistan towards a different region of the country would further weaken NATO-ISAF's stabilisation mission. ISAF is already suffering from national caveats of many troop contributing countries, which prevents proper allocation and geographical distribution of ISAF-troops towards the most problematic areas. As the birthplace of the Taliban, Kandahar is a crucial province when it comes to stability and security. If Kandahar City falls to the Taliban, the insurgency will again have secured a stable and totemic base from which to threaten Kabul and the rest of the country.

**Option 4: Withdrawal of Canadian military forces after February 2009**

Since 2001, Canada has committed itself to Afghanistan. It has promised the Afghan Government support in defeating the Taliban insurgency and creating better living conditions for the people. That commitment is far from being fulfilled as the Afghan Government and the people currently need more help now than ever. The Afghan road to peace and prosperity is rockier than ever before. In addition, Canada's presence in Afghanistan is necessary to ensure that Al Qaeda and related extremist elements do not again have a geo-political base for their global terrorist actions. **Consequently, the withdrawal of Canadian troops should be linked to specific measures of success and not to an arbitrary calendar date determined by a domestic political agenda.** So far, Canada and its international partners already have difficulties convincing the Afghans that they are in Afghanistan to see their task through to the end.

**Building on elements of these four options, The Senlis Council recommends the Panel to consider an alternative option:**

**New Panel Option: Short-term security and aid; long-term commitment**

As soon as possible, Canada sets clear objectives and measures of success for its security, development and reconstruction tasks in Kandahar. The focus within development efforts will further shift to immediate impact humanitarian aid with the military being the key delivery actor until enough international and Afghan aid organisations are on the ground and able to take over these tasks. Humanitarian aid delivery should also be made subject to clear measures of success. Additional funding should be made available for reconstruction and development efforts. Canada should commit to remaining in Kandahar after 2009 and make its future withdrawal from Kandahar subject to a thorough assessment of progress made based on the established measures of success.

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### 3. Our main recommendations

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**Recommendation I: Military delivers Aid & Security Action Plan (ASAP)**

Canada should develop an Aid & Security Action Plan (ASAP) for Kandahar, focusing on targeted humanitarian aid and enhanced medical treatment capacity through mobile field hospitals, a rebuilt and re-furnished Mirwais Hospital and medical training programmes. Food aid and medical aid will directly improve the relationships with the Afghan people in Kandahar and will positively affect the security mission in the province. Emergency poverty relief should be a priority for the Canadian mission. Given the dire humanitarian situation and negative security environment in Kandahar, the Canadian Government should immediately empower the Canadian military to secure the delivery of Canada-funded food aid and other supplies to Kandahar's people. Where there are no local or international aid organisations present, the Canadian soldiers should be involved in the actual delivery of humanitarian aid.

**Recommendation II: Canada should convene an emergency NATO meeting to discuss the hearts and minds strategy for Afghanistan**

Canada should play a leading role within NATO to create a new balance between military and humanitarian efforts within the stabilisation strategy for Afghanistan. Economic-focused humanitarian interventions should be placed at the core of military planning as a way to pursue an effective hearts and minds strategy. The core challenge is to show the people that the international community is addressing their most basic needs. So far, the failure to do so has given the Taliban a strategic advantage over international troops. A focus on economic humanitarian aid will defuse tensions and create support for the international presence and the central government within rural communities. It will also reduce the growing control that the Taliban exert over those communities, making the troops' missions safer.

**The following issues should *inter alia* be discussed as part of the agenda of the emergency NATO meeting:**

- Ways to further increase the non-military role of ISAF forces in terms of humanitarian aid delivery and short-term impact of development;
- Increased burden sharing among NATO and non-NATO countries, and the lifting of national caveats on troop deployments;
- Ways to double ISAF troops to 80,000 including more non-NATO troops and troops from Muslim countries;
- The necessity for NATO to operate in the border regions on Pakistani territory to be able to effectively combat the Taliban insurgency and thwart their logistical and recruiting operations.
- Ways for NATO to influence the Afghan Government and international community in order to develop and implement sound counter-narcotics measures that are compatible with NATO's stabilisation, reconstruction and hearts and minds mission.

**Recommendation III: Decrease civilian casualties and introduce emergency treatment of civilians injured in fighting and bombings**

Increased incidents involving civilian casualties, primarily in bombing raids, have predictably proven to be detrimental in winning the support and trust of the Afghan people, and have caused enormous suffering for the people of Kandahar. We must adopt a policy of zero civilian casualties. Air strikes must be limited to those instances where the objective is well defined and civilians will not be victimised. The deployment of highly skilled military paramedics must be implemented immediately in southern Afghanistan. These paramedics would locate, transport, and stabilize casualties of war in liaison with the armed forces and should also be used to train Afghan women and men as future paramedics.

**Recommendation IV: Achievement of measures of success defines withdrawal date**

Canada should establish clear objectives and corresponding measures of success for its humanitarian, stabilisation and reconstruction work in Afghanistan and should make both its troop commitment and a future end date of its mission dependent on measurable progress in these fields. Key indicators should include health-care, education, and training of ANA/ANP. Canada should stay in Afghanistan until the job is done. To leave before then, can easily be seen as a manifestation of the West's 'disposable' and arrogant attitude toward the people of Afghanistan, a fickle abandonment of our "most significant foreign policy endeavour", and a sad commentary on the value of the Canadian lives already sacrificed.

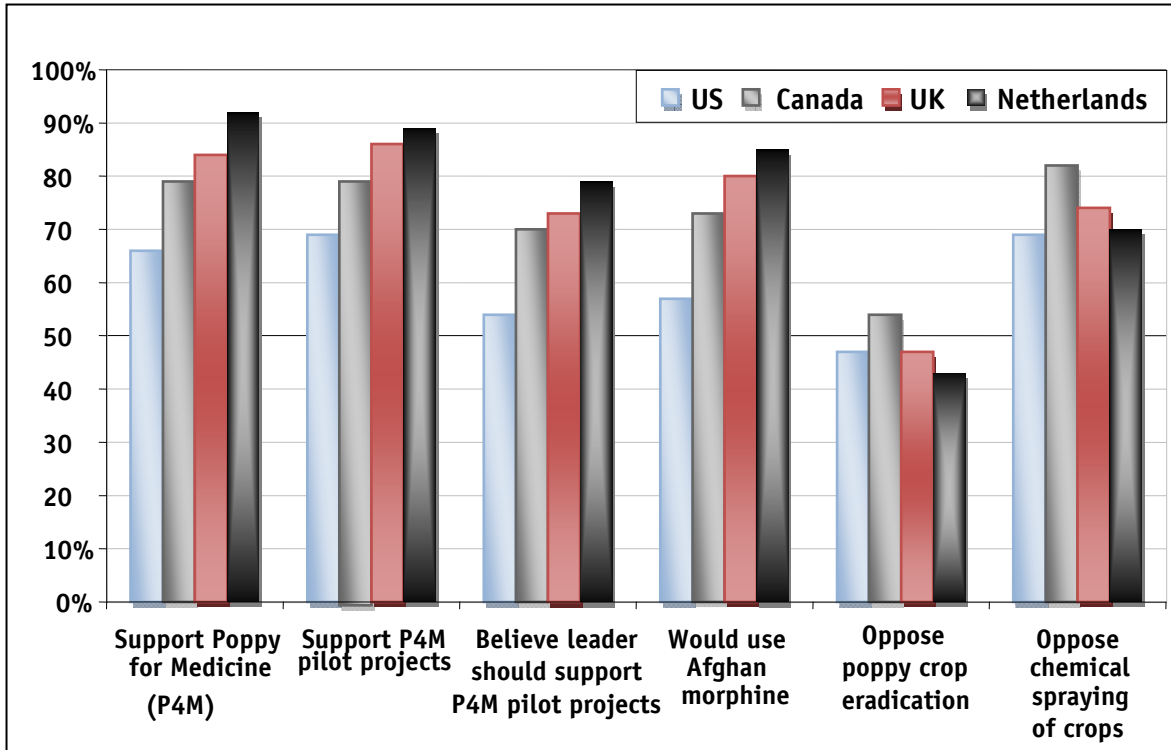
**Recommendation V: Sound counter-narcotics policies**

Canada must take a leadership role in support of President Karzai against chemical spraying of poppy crops. Chemical spraying of poppy growing areas would be disastrous for the Canadian hearts and minds mission. An opinion poll conducted in August 2007 by Ipsos Reid showed that 82 per cent of the Canadian public opposed chemical spraying.<sup>1</sup> 54 per cent opposed forced crop eradication altogether.

**Canada should support the implementation of a scientific *Poppy for Medicine* pilot project in Kandahar province to investigate the positive benefits of local morphine production on farming communities' security and development.** The Ipsos Reid opinion poll further showed that 79 per cent of Canadians support a *Poppy for Medicine* pilot projects and 70 per cent thinks Prime Minister Harper should support this short-term economic development tool. At the same time Canada should invest further in alternative livelihoods and diversification of the rural economy.

<sup>1</sup> For the full opinion poll results, please see: The Senlis Council, 'A Lost Mandate: The Public Calls for a New Direction in Afghan Counter-Narcotics Policies' (September 2007). Accessible at The Senlis Council's website at: [http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/publications/publications/024\\_publication](http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/publications/publications/024_publication).

**The European Parliament recently adopted a Recommendation to the Council of the European Union endorsing a scientific pilot project to further investigate the possibilities for strictly- controlled morphine production in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> The Parliament also expressed the Europe-wide consensus that chemical spraying of poppy crops should not be implemented in the war-ravaged country.**



*The 2007 polling results for the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands*

**Recommendation VI: The Canadian Government should empower Canadian citizens to help Afghans through exchange and development programmes**

The Canadian Government should do more to empower Canadian citizens to help Afghanistan. For this purpose, it should build on its “Canada Corps” initiative and broaden this approach with a proper infrastructure that allows Canadian individuals and aid organisations to maximise their role and impact in the Afghan reconstruction and development process. Stimulating help programmes and professional exchanges between Canadians and Afghans will not only increase mutual understanding, but will also empower more Canadians to directly provide support to communities in Kandahar, creating stronger popular support for a difficult but necessary mission. The Canadian Government should also investigate ways to encourage private investment by Canadian entities, for example through a system of tax credits.

<sup>2</sup> For the full version of the adopted Recommendation to the Council of the European Union, please see the website of the European Parliament at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/file.jsp?id=5491542>.



## **4. Our underlying recommendations**

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### ***A: Provide mobile field hospitals now***

Mobile field hospitals are urgently needed to deal with war casualties, severe malnutrition and other urgent medical cases, and should be immediately established until proper hospitals are in place in southern Afghanistan. Blood banks must be established as part of each temporary mobile medical and surgical facility and eventually become part of the permanent hospitals.

### ***B: Rebuild existing hospitals to help Afghans***

Existing hospitals must be immediately renovated to provide not only basic health care, but also care for war casualties and the endemic malnutrition. As part of this hospital renovation, training in basic hygiene and institutional housekeeping should be provided to local Afghan people to create immediate employment in the existing hospitals.

### ***C: Implement outreach and training programmes to foster sustainable improvements in health***

Medical doctors should be provided with continuing medical education by their military counterparts to manage the trauma of war, and outreach programs for the malnourished, children under five, pregnant women and the elderly must be developed and implemented. Meanwhile, comprehensive surveillance of health indicators such as disease incidence and prevalence must begin immediately. This surveillance must include those living in refugee camps and remote villages. The information gained should be used to guide the response of the international community.

### ***D: Build new hospitals to international standards to meet Afghans' expectations***

The international community should immediately fund and provide the engineering and construction expertise to build new hospitals in Kandahar and Lashkar Gah. To positively impact on Afghans' perceptions, these hospitals must be built to British and Canadian standards, the same standards as the hospitals provided for NATO military troops.

### ***E: Make emergency poverty relief a top priority***

Poverty is the primary enemy of Afghanistan's reconstruction, and must be defeated. As a beneficiary of international aid, Afghanistan receives the lowest amount of reconstruction financing compared to all other post-conflict nations, signifying a failure to recognise that Afghanistan is among the poorest of the poor nations. The response to emergency crises like starvation is not only a humanitarian necessity – it represents an essential part of any stabilisation effort.

### ***F: Engage more with the local communities***

It is important to engage with communities on the ground, reflecting their priorities and real needs in national development policies. By integrating the development priorities and possibilities of the real Afghanistan, Afghans' increasingly negative perceptions of the reconstruction process can be dispelled.

