

DYING FOR PEACE: OUR SOLDIERS IN KABUL

Introduction

Focus

Canada's military effort in Kabul, Afghanistan, has been referred to as our most dangerous mission since the Korean War. On the heels of the death of Corporal Jamie Murphy, many are beginning to agree with this perspective and to wonder if the mission is worth the costs.



Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

Shortly before daybreak, on a cold January morning, Michael Barker made his way to the home of a family in his parish in Conception Harbour, Newfoundland. As a military chaplain and parish priest, Barker was charged with the responsibility of telling Norman and Alice Murphy that their son, Jamie, had been killed while serving in Kabul, Afghanistan. They had been counting down the days—just nine to go—before Jamie would be out of Kabul and on his way home. Barker delivered his message—unwittingly shattering a family's sense of hope and peace—and prepared them for their son's funeral. War in a far-off land had taken their son away from them.

Murphy's death came on the eve of the changing of the guard in Afghanistan. The first six-month rotation had proven to be quite successful. Canadian forces were able to establish ties with the community in Kabul and put themselves into a leadership position in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Indeed, by the end of Rotation "0" two Canadians assumed key command positions with ISAF. Lieutenant-General Richard Hillier became commander of ISAF forces, with Major-General Andrew Leslie taking on the responsibilities of deputy commander.

However, the initial six months of Operation Athena resulted in several casualties. Early on, tragedy struck when two Canadians died after their Iltis vehicle struck a landmine. Some believe the device was planted just hours before the vehicle drove through the area. Then Jamie Murphy was killed when a suicide attacker with explosives

strapped to his torso jumped onto a Canadian vehicle and detonated the explosives, killing Murphy and an Afghan civilian. Murphy was part of a two-vehicle patrol heading to meet the mayor of Kabul. The Taliban immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Initially, Canadian forces believed the attack might have been an act of retaliation after Canadian troops had helped Kabul police carry out a drug raid the previous week. About a week after the suicide bombing, a Taliban spokesperson informed a French news agency that the bombing had been carried out by a Canadian. According to the report, Abdullah Kadr, the son of Ahmed Said Kadr (an Al Qaeda operative, according to the Canadian government), detonated the bomb in retaliation for the killing of his father in Pakistan. Some members of the Kadr family live in the Toronto area. Minister of Defence David Pratt encouraged Canadians to take the news with "a grain of salt" until authorities could get to the bottom of the allegation.

The death of Jamie Murphy set off a fresh wave of controversy on the Canadian political landscape. Once again, the safety and effectiveness of the Iltis was thrown into question. The Iltis, an open-airod vehicle, was the primary patrol vehicle used by Canadians in Kabul. Both tragedies in Afghanistan came while our soldiers were travelling in them. People started to pose some difficult questions:

- If the soldiers who struck the landmine in August 2003 had been riding in a Humvee equipped with blast protection instead of an Iltis, would they have lived?

Further Research

To learn more about NATO and ISAF visit www.otan.nato.int/home.htm.

Quote

"The attack on these soldiers was a shameful act, but it will not detract from our commitment to help Afghanistan build a better and more hopeful future."
— Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO Secretary-General, *Toronto Star*, January 28, 2004

- If Jamie Murphy had been in an enclosed Land Rover, would the suicide bomber have been able to mount the Canadian vehicle and detonate his explosives?

Canadian soldiers serving in Afghanistan have mixed feelings about the Iltis. On the one hand, they like the idea of "presence patrols" through the streets of Kabul and "dismount patrols" where they are able to interact with Afghan civilians. An open-aired vehicle like the Iltis suggests openness. Thus, locals might be more inclined to see the Canadians as partners in the reconstruction of the city as opposed to an occupying army. The commanders of Operation Athena also say that bigger armoured vehicles can't negotiate the narrow streets of Kabul with the ease and effectiveness of the Iltis. On the other hand, some speculate that a more heavily armoured vehicle, like the

Mercedes-Benz Gelandewagen vehicles on order for the Canadian Forces (100 are slated to arrive in Afghanistan starting in February and March 2004) might have saved the lives of the soldiers who have died thus far in Operation Athena.

Despite the controversy relating to Canada's presence in Afghanistan, both the military and politicians stand resolute in their commitment to finish the job they started. Prime Minister Paul Martin reaffirmed this position. "We will not forget the sacrifices these soldiers have made to make Canada and the world a safer place" (*Toronto Star* January 28, 2004). With the second troop rotation on the ground in Afghanistan, and a commitment to keep a presence of 500 soldiers after that rotation ends, it appears that the Canadian military is in for the long haul.

Questions

1. What tragedies occurred during the first six months of Operation Athena?
2. Who was Abdullah Kadr? Why did his name surface in relation to the death of Jamie Murphy?
3. What evidence is there that Canadian soldiers play an important role in Afghanistan?
4. Based on the information provided, do you think the Iltis is a suitable vehicle for Canada's mission in Afghanistan?

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Video Review

Answer the questions on this page while watching the video.

Quote

"There's certainly no early exit strategies out of Afghanistan." — Canadian defence minister David Pratt, *Toronto Star*, February 7, 2004

1. What happened to Corporal Jamie Murphy?

2. How many days did Murphy have left in his tour before the incident? ____
3. What is the name of Canada's base in Kabul? _____
4. Describe the streets of Kabul.

5. What does Major Andrew Sedunich mean when he says Canada does not want to be an occupational force in Afghanistan?

6. What is the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)?

7. How many soldiers are serving under ISAF commander Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier? _____
8. What do you think of Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier's perspective on leading ISAF troops in Kabul?

9. Who is Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan? _____
10. According to the ambassador, what is Canada's mission in Afghanistan?

11. What is Jane Maklohone doing for the women of Afghanistan?

12. What is the Sparks Academy? How is it helping children?

DYING FOR PEACE: OUR SOLDIERS IN KABUL

Canadian Leaders in Afghanistan

Canadians hold a number of leadership positions in the Afghan capital of Kabul. Not only do Canadians make up the largest contingent of soldiers—2 000 of ISAF's 5 500-person force—they also hold several key command posts. Two of these military leaders are profiled below as is Canada's first ambassador to Afghanistan.

Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier

Rick Hillier was born in Newfoundland and has been a long-standing member of Canada's military. After graduating from Memorial University of Newfoundland and completing his armour officer classification training, Hillier was posted to a base in Petawawa, Ontario. Eventually, he was assigned to the Royal Canadian Dragoons, with whom he has served ever since. He has commanded troops at the platoon and division level. He has also been a staff officer at Army Headquarters in Montreal as well as the National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa. He has experience in roles across Canada and the United States, as well as in Europe. Most notably Hillier has served the United Nations and NATO in the former Yugoslavia.

Recently, Hillier was appointed Assistant Chief of Land Staff and later Chief of Land Staff in Canada. Then, in February 2004, Hillier assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, Afghanistan. As commander of ISAF, it is Hillier's responsibility to:

- Ensure a safe and secure environment around Kabul
- Reconstitute authority in Kabul

- Improve the capability of Afghan police and armed forces
- Make sure troops are protected and the situation in Kabul improves for the citizenship

Major-General Andrew Leslie

In his early years, Andrew Leslie earned his education in Canada, the United States, France, Cyprus, and Switzerland. Once he joined the military he demonstrated natural leadership ability and proved indispensable in the combat arms units to which he belonged. Leslie's career gained momentum in 1995 when he was promoted to colonel and was sent to serve in a leadership role in the Balkans. Eventually, he earned the Meritorious Service Medal for his actions under fire in the Balkans campaign. After returning to Canada, Leslie assumed several leadership roles within the Canadian military on the home front. He also proved his worth domestically in Canadian army efforts during the Manitoba floods of 1997 and the ice storm in Eastern Canada in 1998.

Leslie is well trained in peace support operational tactics; he received training at the Vienna Seminar of the International Peace Academy. By the time Canada committed to a military presence in Afghanistan, Leslie proved to be a logical choice for leadership in Kabul. Currently he is the Canadian commander, Task Force Kabul and deputy commander of ISAF.

Source: NATO/ISAF — www.afnorth.nato.int/ISAF/structure/structure_whoswho.htm

Christopher Alexander

Christopher Alexander became Canada's first-ever ambassador to Afghanistan, in July 2003. At the age of 35, he is one of Canada's youngest ambassadors. However, Alexander brings a surprising wealth of diplomatic experience to this critical diplomatic enterprise. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1991, he has served as assistant to the deputy minister of foreign affairs and the deputy director in the Eastern Europe division. Once posted to Kabul, he was charged with three primary responsibilities:

- To co-ordinate Canada's military presence in Kabul
- To administer aid packages flowing into Afghanistan from Canada

- To construct a viable political and diplomatic relationship with the new government of Afghanistan

Alexander takes the job very seriously. He meets regularly with prominent figures in the Kabul community. He works closely with the Canadian military based outside Camp Julien. On occasion he even takes part in patrols with troops. In short, he is reading the political landscape and positioning Canada to play a prominent role in the future of Afghanistan.

Source: CBC News, www.cbc.ca/news/background/world/alexander.html; Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canada-magazine/02-title-en.asp

Analysis

1. Several specific responsibilities are listed for ISAF Commander Rick Hillier and Canadian Ambassador Christopher Alexander. Which responsibilities do you think will be most challenging for each man?

2. Which accomplishment do you think best prepared Andrew Leslie for action in Kabul?

3. What skills do you think would be most needed for Canadians serving in a war-torn nation such as Afghanistan?

4. Would you be willing to work in a position such as those described in this story? Why? Why not?

DYING FOR PEACE: OUR SOLDIERS IN KABUL

Casualties of War in Afghanistan

The ongoing struggle in Afghanistan has resulted in the deaths of several young Canadians. Canada has mourned these soldiers and worried about future casualties.

Incident 1: Friendly Fire

What happened?

On April 17, 2002, during Operation Apollo, an American F-16 jet dropped a 250-kilogram bomb on Canadian soldiers taking part in night training near Kandahar. Tragically, the bomb killed four Canadians and injured eight others. The pilots of the F-16 thought they were being attacked by the troops on the ground. Despite receiving orders not to fire, they did so anyway, claiming self-defence. Minutes later they learned they had bombed their own allies.

Casualties

Four killed, eight wounded

Dead: Sgt. Marc Léger, Cpl. Ainsworth Dyer, Pte. Richard Green, Pte. Nathan Smith

Wounded: Sgt. Lorne Ford, Cpl. René Paquette, Cpl. Curtis Hollister, Cpl. Brett Perry, Pte. Norman Link, Cpl. Brian Decaire, Master Cpl. Stanley P. Clark, Cpl. Shane Brennan

Warnings

Canadian soldiers took every reasonable precaution to avoid any kind of accidental or friendly-fire incident. Nonetheless, the U.S. pilots ignored their orders and attacked the Canadians in “self-defence.” The only possible lesson the Canadians could extract from the incident could be a lesson already learned by U.S. troops in the 1991 Gulf War, where 24 per cent of U.S. troop

deaths came as a result of friendly-fire incidents (Jessica Guynn, April 7, 2003, www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2003/030407-iraq02.htm).

Outcome

The U.S. pilots eventually escaped manslaughter charges from the U.S. military. One received a reprimand and the other a court martial.

Incident 2: Landmine Legacy

What happened?

Tragedy struck two months into Operation Athena, Canada’s contribution to NATO’s ISAF forces in Kabul. Five Canadians, in two open-air vehicles, were on a routine patrol about three and a half kilometres from Canada’s base at Camp Julien. One of the vehicles struck a landmine, killing two men and injuring three others. All five soldiers were members of the Royal Canadian Regiment, 3rd Battalion, based in Petawawa, Ontario. The road had been deemed safe by engineers less than 24 hours earlier. Investigators concluded that one of the Canadian vehicles ran over a landmine that had probably been combined with two other mines. The explosion of the one mine set off a chain reaction, sending the vehicle flying and leaving a giant crater.

Casualties

Two killed, three wounded

Dead: Sgt. Robert Short and Cpl. Robbie Beerenfenger

Wounded: Master Cpl. Jason Hamilton, Cpl. Thomas Stirling, and Cpl. Cameron Laidlaw

Update

In late February, Canadian forces in Afghanistan launched Operation Whirlwind and believed they had captured the man responsible for the deaths of Canadians Short and Beerenfenger. They also seized a large cache of weapons and explosives.

Did you know . . .

The Red Cross estimates that close to 100 people are injured or killed by landmines in Afghanistan each month? Canada is to contribute \$10-million to the \$60-million international effort in 2004 to remove landmines in Afghanistan?

Warnings

- The Red Cross recorded 1 286 landmine deaths in Afghanistan in 2002.
- Experts estimate there are millions of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) scattered throughout the country.
- According to the United Nations, 27 of Afghanistan's 29 provinces were affected by landmine tragedies in 2002.

Source: *The Globe and Mail*, October 3, 2003

Outcome

Canadians are actively engaged in the location and removal of landmines in Afghanistan.

Incident 3: The Taliban Fights Back

What happened?

Jamie Murphy was killed when a suicide bomber jumped onto a Canadian vehicle and detonated the explosives he was wearing, taking his own life as well as Murphy's and that of an Afghan civilian. Murphy was part of a two-vehicle patrol heading to meet the mayor of Kabul.

Activity

Select one of the incidents listed above. Write a news story based on the information provided for the incident.

Casualties

One soldier killed, one civilian killed, three soldiers injured

Dead: Cpl. Jamie Murphy; Abdul Qadir, an Afghan civilian

Injured: Lt. Jason Feyko, Cpl. Jeremy MacDonald, Cpl. Richard Newman; eight civilians were also injured

Warnings

Just weeks before the attack on Murphy and his comrades, Canadian Press reported that between 60 and 120 suicide bombers had entered Kabul.

They were preparing a wave of attacks on ISAF forces on behalf of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. (*Toronto Star*, December 30, 2003). Suicide bombers had also killed four Germans in June, four Kabul security officers in December, and a British soldier just days after the attack on the Canadians.

Outcome

Canadians have remained resolute in their commitment to their work in Kabul. Soldiers on patrol are trying to avoid travelling at slow speeds while on "presence patrols" and are attempting to be extra vigilant when it comes to people approaching their vehicles.

DYING FOR PEACE: OUR SOLDIERS IN KABUL

The Case of the Kadr Family

Update

In early March 2004, international experts were completing DNA testing to determine the identity of Jamie Murphy's killer. The Kadr family claimed that they had spoken to their son and that he could not have been the suicide bomber.

An already grief-stricken nation was dealt a second shocking blow when news emerging from Afghanistan indicated that Corporal Jamie Murphy may have been killed by a fellow Canadian. A Taliban spokesperson informed the Agence France-Presse that the suicide bomber who killed Murphy and a civilian was the son of a Canadian citizen who was originally from Egypt. The report went on to link the bomber to a U.S. detainee in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Apparently the detainee was the bomber's brother. Once Canadian authorities and journalists could decipher the information in the report, it became clear that the Taliban spokesperson was talking about Abdullah Kadr. Suddenly the spotlight was on the Kadr family—a family with ties to the Middle East and to a Toronto neighbourhood where some family members still live.

Canadian authorities claim that Ahmed Said Kadr, Abdullah's father, was an Al Qaeda operative killed by the Pakistan army in a raid in the fall of 2003. The elder Kadr was known to authorities as "Al Kanadi" or, the Canadian, and was thought to be an associate of Osama bin Laden. Could his eldest son, Abdullah, have been the man behind the suicide bombing that resulted in the death of Jamie Murphy? Minister of Defence David Pratt warned Canadians, "You have to keep in mind that the source here is apparently a Taliban member, and we take all of the information that they provide with a grain of salt" (*The Globe and Mail*, February 5, 2004). Based on accounts provided by the Kadr family and the investigation in Kabul, the Canadian

government feels it is unlikely that Abdullah Kadr was the suicide bomber.

Ahmed and Abdullah Kadr are not the only members of the family to receive intense attention from the Canadian government and the international media. One other family member, Omar, was captured by U.S. forces and remains a detainee in Cuba. Currently, two Canadian lawyers are taking his case to the U.S. Supreme Court to fight for his release. Finally, in late 2003, the story of Abdurahman Kadr entered the media spotlight. Abdurahman had also been a detainee in Cuba and, instead of returning him to Canada at the end of his detention, he was sent back to Afghanistan. Kadr's grandparents made an appeal through the media, claiming that Abdurahman had left Afghanistan and had approached embassies in Pakistan and Turkey, seeking refuge, only to be turned away by Canadian authorities. Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs flatly denied the suggestion that they would turn away one of their own citizens but put the diplomatic community on notice to keep an eye out for Abdurahman Kadr. Days later, he arrived at the Canadian embassy in Sarajevo. Within hours, he was on a plane headed for Canada. In an effort to set the record straight, Kadr agreed to hold a news conference. The news conference revealed some startling information. Kadr told the gathering that, when he was 15 years old, he received training at an Al Qaeda-related training camp. When pressed on the kind of training he received, Kadr said, "It's just training, not training to kill Americans, just training; to go and fight the Northern Alliance. . . . In Afghani-

Update

The Kadr family made the headlines again in March 2004. In an interview with CBC's *The National*, Abdurahman Kadr said that, not only was he trained at an Al Qaeda camp, his father had asked him to become a suicide bomber. *The National* also tracked down Abdullah Kadr in Pakistan, confirming that he was not the suicide bomber responsible for the killing of Jamie Murphy. It appears that Defence Minister David Pratt's advice to take claims made by the Taliban "with a grain of salt" was well founded. It appears that the Kadr family legacy is continuing to evolve.

stan you know people just go to train. It's a common thing that every kid around 15 or that age go and take training" (*Toronto Star*, December 2, 2003). And that is what Kadr did—receiving training at the notorious Khalden camp in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan. The Khalden training camp:

- trained Richard Reid, a man from Britain who plotted to blow up a plane with explosives in his shoe
- trained Ahmed Ressam, a Canadian resident who was convicted of plan-

ning to bomb Los Angeles airport

- trained Zacarias Moussaoui, a man on trial for his part in the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001
- has apparently been visited by Osama bin Laden

Abdurahman Kadr refers to his training as a "waste of my life" and hopes that Canadians will not hold his attendance at the camp against him and his family. After all, he was a 15-year-old boy simply doing what his family expected of him.

Questions

1. In point form, identify and explain the importance of Ahmed Said Kadr, Abdullah Kadr, Omar Kadr, and Abdurahman Kadr.

2. Imagine you are a journalist attending the conference held by Abdurahman Kadr. What questions would you have asked?

3. Explain your personal reaction to the information Abdurahman Kadr shared with Canadians that day.

DYING FOR PEACE: OUR SOLDIERS IN KABUL

Loya Jirga Agrees on Constitution

Further Research

To stay informed about current Afghan policies and personalities, consider visiting the official Afghan Government Web site at www.afghan.gov.

With the ousting of the Taliban in 2001, the U.S. had put itself in a position to dictate the direction of the future Afghan government. The U.S. installed a president, Hamid Karzai, and set about establishing a democratic government for the people of Afghanistan. This proved problematic because Afghanistan had just endured years of warfare and was essentially a ship without a captain. Because of this situation, Karzai and his followers called a *loya jirga*, or grand assembly, to discuss the future of Afghanistan and to write a constitution. If Afghanistan was going to embrace democracy, they were going to do so the Afghan way—through a *loya jirga*. The tradition of *loya jirga* goes back as far as 1709, when three Afghan tribes held a secret gathering to plot a rebellion against a tyrannical foreign governor. In a sense, Karzai's *loya jirga* sought the same thing—to replace the rule of the tyrannical Taliban with a fair and just Islamic republic.

The meeting started in December 2003 amid tight security. Canadian troops provided the bulk of the protection for the 500 delegates that included men and women from across Afghanistan and a number of people returning from exile. One of the people involved in the negotiations was Carleton University professor Omar Zakhilwal, who took a leave of absence from his job to advise the Karzai government.

Karzai called for the formation of 10

working groups to draft the 160-article document. Special attention was given to the variety of ethnic groups that make up Afghanistan as well as women's rights and fundamental civil rights. With this ambitious agenda in place, it is little wonder the 10 days scheduled for meetings stretched into a 22-day marathon. Negotiations were stressful at times, with the majority Pashtun ethnic group failing to come to terms with the minority Tajiks and Uzbeks.

In the end, compromise led to a new constitution that defended minority rights and established fundamental rights and freedoms for all the people of Afghanistan. Each side agreed to significant concessions. The most significant amendment came when the delegates agreed to grant official status to minority languages—the most contentious issue of the conference. The new constitution also declared that men and women should be treated equally. At the end of the process President Karzai declared, "There is no winner or loser. Everybody has won, it is everybody's. It belongs to every Afghan" (*Toronto Star*, January 5, 2004). With a constitution in place, Afghanistan is preparing for June elections.

After performing his duties as adviser to the interim Afghan government, Omar Zakhilwal greeted the new constitution with a sense of relief. He expressed hope that this new democracy would help the people of Afghanistan to recover from decades of war and poverty.

Questions

1. What is a *loya jirga*?
2. What issues were discussed and debated at the *loya jirga*?
3. What hope does Omar Zakhilwal have for the people of Afghanistan?
4. How do you see the future of Afghanistan?

DYING FOR PEACE: OUR SOLDIERS IN KABUL

Final Activity

Further Research

To learn more about the Royal Canadian Legion and its policies and programs, visit www.legion.ca. To discover other actions Canadians are taking to improve the world, go to *Canadians in the World* at www.dfait-maect.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/. This site is designed for teachers and students.

Reaching Out to the Children of Afghanistan

During a visit to Canadian troops in Kabul over the Christmas holidays in 2003, Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson remarked that children of Afghanistan serve as a tremendous example of the human spirit. Despite losing family members to war and living in poverty, the children continue to laugh and play in the streets. Based on what she witnessed, Clarkson remarked, "I think the children are enormously resilient" (*Toronto Star*, December 31, 2003). Perhaps this is the kind of image and idea that has inspired our troops and people back home to take the case of the children of Afghanistan to heart and to strive to become personally involved in their struggle. Read the following stories of inspiring efforts by Canadians in Afghanistan.

Toys for Afghanistan

Master-Corporal Russell Storrington, a signals operator serving in Kabul, e-mailed a simple message home to his mother. "Mom, these kids have nothing. Let's give these kids some things to smile about." Storrington's mother, Heather Atkins, responded with an initial shipment of 26 boxes of goods sent by personal mail. By the time the first shipment was sent, news of the effort had gotten out. Working through the Tamworth Royal Canadian Legion near Napanee, Ontario, Atkins witnessed what has been called "snowballing generosity." Close to 30 schools became involved in the collection of donations, with the legion hall eventually running out of space to store the toys and other items. This prompted a

Kingston businessman to donate warehouse space. As the project progressed, a network of 20 legions was storing donations along with the Kingston warehouse. One mosque in Edmonton filled 485 boxes with goods. In the end, over 14 tonnes of toys, blankets, clothing, school supplies, gum, diapers, and other supplies were shipped to Afghanistan. From one simple e-mail from a son to a mother, Canadian generosity found its way to the children of Afghanistan. Looking back on the effort, Russell Storrington said, "Me, personally, I have so much that I can give. I think this is maybe why people respond to it. They get to see what it's like and maybe people say, you know, 'I wouldn't want to live like that either,' so they help where they can." Source: *The Globe and Mail*, January 8, 2004

A School of Joy and Hope

Kabul is known as the widows' capital of the world. After decades of war and poverty, many women are left to raise children on their own. Based on this sad fact, Roshan Thomas, an optometrist from British Columbia, enlisted the support of her family and set about establishing a school for five- and six-year-olds in Kabul. The Sparks Academy is the only school of its kind in Afghanistan. The main goal of the school is to instill a love of learning and play in the hearts and minds of young students. Thomas says the students were initially reluctant to embrace the joy of play. Quite simply, many children did not know how to play or have fun. Thomas structured her curriculum around bringing these children out of themselves, restoring their innocence,

