

Filmmaker blasts CBC for 'abandoning' its mandate: Broadcaster deprives Canadians of learning about troops' role, award winner says

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The Ottawa Citizen

November 22, 2003

Veteran documentary producer Garth Pritchard, who filmed the aftermath of the infamous "friendly fire" bombing in Afghanistan, accused the CBC last night of betraying its mandate to tell Canadians of their soldiers' heroics overseas.

"The national broadcaster has totally misled Canadians and abandoned its mandate to tell the story of what our military is accomplishing in places such as Afghanistan," he said after receiving the Ross Munro Media Award from Liberal MP David Pratt on behalf of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute.

Also honoured at a Museum of Civilization dinner attended by Canada's senior military brass was Gen. Paul Manson. The former chief of Defence staff was awarded the coveted Vimy Award by the current chief, Gen. Raymond Henault.

In receiving the award, Gen. Manson warned that the capability of the Canadian Forces had been in "a slide" since the mid-1960s and could be headed for a "death spiral."

"I fear very much that they are working their way toward that sort of a predicament," he said.

It's quite obvious that there has to be action to field a much larger force given Canada's current military commitments, he said.

Mr. Pritchard spent three months embedded with troops of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Afghanistan and filmed life-saving surgery performed on survivors of the U.S. bombing that killed four soldiers.

The three documentaries he produced -- Friendly Fire, Waging Peace and Chasing Shadows -- were rejected for broadcast by the CBC and instead aired on the History Channel.

Mr. Pritchard waved an Isfeld doll and told the audience: "This is the type of story that you only get by living with the troops in the field, which our national broadcaster will not do."

The Isfeld dolls were made by Master Cpl. Mark Isfeld's mother, and he distributed them to children in war-torn Bosnia, where he was posted as a Canadian peacekeeper in 1994.

Mr. Pritchard told the story of the dolls in a documentary The Price of Duty after Cpl. Isfeld was killed by a landmine.

"It's now up to corporate and private funding to tell the story of our military, despite the huge subsidies of taxpayers' money lavished on our national broadcaster," he said.