



**Testimony of Colonel (Retired) Alain Pellerin, Executive Director, and  
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Conference of Defence Associations  
to the  
House of Commons  
Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

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**Introduction**

The Conference of Defence Associations is grateful for this opportunity to comment on the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); an international force of more than 36,000 troops from 37 countries. This total does not include the commitment of the extra 700 Poles, an extra 500 Australians, an extra US Brigade of 3,500, and a UK Battle Group of 1200 which will bring the total to over 40,000, all of which will be deployed in the key southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan. This deployment also provides support for the work of 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) across the whole country.

The principal mission of these military personnel is to assist the Afghan government in extending and exercising its authority and influence across the country in order to create conditions for stabilization and reconstruction.

My recent 10 day visit to Afghanistan in late October and early November, and the opportunities I had to speak with the Canadians there, has provided me with a privileged, although not unique, perspective I wish to share with you today..

That perspective allows me to report that the Canadian troops, both male and female, regular and reserve, serving in Afghanistan believe in their mission; they

believe they are making a difference; they believe that progress is being achieved; they believe in their leaders; they believe in the quality of their equipment; and they believe that they have been well prepared for their mission.

They also believe that, if they were withdrawn before the mission has achieved its objectives, all they have sacrificed will be put at risk.

We must remember that the ISAF mission, which is the Canadian mission, is about a lot more than purely military operations.

The CF is also involved in the reconstruction of a formerly failed state which has slowly advanced to the status of a "fragile" state. Such Canadian responsibilities as the PRT in Kandahar, and the critical assistance in developing the governance capabilities of the elected government of Afghanistan provided by the Strategic Assistance Team in Kabul, are part of the tangible Canadian contribution, as is the assistance provided to the training of the Afghanistan National Army, and especially of the training of the Afghanistan National Police.

Canadians understand that there is no "quick fix" for the reconstruction of a fragile state. After 25 years of brutal war, everything needs to be rebuilt. That being said, the situation is much better than it was six years ago under the Taliban and better



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than it was a little over a year ago when the Canadian Battle Group arrived in Kandahar. Progress is being made.

We, and ISAF, are there, not as invaders. We are there at the request of the elected Government of Afghanistan and under a UN Mandate.

The people of Afghanistan are weary of war, are weary of destitution, are weary of hopelessness—the majority of the Afghan people want us there (recent BBC and Asia Foundation polls indicate that 80% of the citizens support the presence of the coalition soldiers in Afghanistan), and they want the economic and social development progress, which is taking part in much of the country, to spread to all parts of the country.

And they fear what would happen to them if our search for an early "Exit Strategy" places its emphasis upon "Exit" rather than upon "Strategy," and leads to the callous abandonment of a "fragile but growing state" which is still too weak to stand up to its oppressors.

And they especially fear the return of the Taliban and its partners in crime, drugs, and terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our presentation will deal with four topics:

- Criteria for assessing the ISAF mission's effectiveness;
- The ISAF Concept of Operations;
- Assessing the success of ISAF Operations; and
- Assessing the Consequences of a premature withdrawal of ISAF .

#### **ISAF MISSION EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA**

The CDA believes that the ISAF mission and Canada's considerable part in it will be considered to have been effective and successful if and when:

- The campaign of terror being

waged by the Taliban and their extremist allies fails;

- Security is restored to the point that ordinary Afghans enjoy personal liberty and freedom from fear;

- The Afghan Army and Police become effective in ensuring security;

- The Country's market economy begins to flourish;

- Central Afghan Government control spreads throughout the Country;

- Human rights are respected;

- A significant infrastructure development program is underway; and

- The elements of a 'made in Afghanistan' democratic system of government spreads to all parts of the country.

It is obvious that achieving the foregoing is a phenomenally complex and difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, the CDA believes the absence of any one of the above criteria would put the successful completion of the ISAF mission in doubt. It is also important to remember that it is better to help Afghans do it imperfectly than do it ourselves, in essence an Afghan face at an Afghan pace.

#### **THE ISAF CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

The mission of the NATO-led ISAF is to conduct military operations in order to assist the Government of Afghanistan in establishing and maintaining, with the full engagement of the Afghan National Security Forces, a safe and secure environment that will allow the government to extend its authority and influence and thereby facilitate Afghanistan's reconstruction and establish regional stability.



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From its inception, this mission has consisted of five (5) phases:

- Phase 1 - Assessment and Preparation, including operations in Kabul;
- Phase 2 - Geographic expansion, (now completed);
- Phase 3 - Stabilization; and
- Phase 4/5 - Transition / Redeployment.

In October 2003, the UN Security Council authorized the expansion of the NATO mission beyond Kabul. In October 2004, Stage 1 of the expansion to the North was completed, with Stage 2 in the West following in September 2005. Stage 3 of the expansion, to include the South, was completed on 31 July 2006, and Stage 4, to include the East, was completed October 6, 2006.

Currently the Canadian Forces and seven other nations, as part of the ISAF Regional Command South, are engaged in the early stages of the Stabilization phase; whereas ISAF Regional Commands West and North have progressed further into the Stabilization phase of the operations.

#### **ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF THE ISAF OPERATION**

A conventional mantra is that there is “No Military Solution” in Afghanistan.

A far better way of looking at it would be to say that “Without security the military provides, there can be no development.” Fortunately, the deployment of ISAF has seen a substantial extension of the area in Afghanistan in which its citizens can feel secure.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is a highly respected international organization. Each Year it

conducts the *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey*, which was based in the 2007 assessment on structured interviews with the headmen of 508 selected villages in 236 districts across all provinces, and thus provides a useful “grass roots” database of opinion at the village level.

The *2007 Winter Survey*, released on Mar 5, 2007, reports that the security situation in Afghanistan was rated by the “grass roots” as Very Good (12) or Good (11) in 23 provinces, and as Very Bad (1) or Bad (7) in eight provinces (all in the Southern region). In late 2006, then, 75% of Afghanistan’s provinces felt secure. The challenge for ISAF is to extend that feeling of security to the remaining eight provinces.

With security comes development. The same UNODC *2007 Winter Survey* asked about external assistance activities reaching the “grass roots.” The village headmen reported that 451 (89%) of the 508 villages surveyed had received external assistance with 828 assistance activities.

- 54% of these assistance activities were provided by the Government of Afghanistan,
- 24% by UN Agencies,
- 17% by NGOs,
- 4% by USAID, and
- 1% by other agencies.

The assistance activities took the form of:

- medical activities (50.2%),
- infrastructure (20.4%),
- agricultural (13.5%),
- education (11.1%),
- employment (3.9%),
- other (0.3).

We can also turn from the “grass roots” perspective provided by the UNODC to a macro level in order to trace economic growth rates in GDP, investment, and exports of Afghanistan over the past five years; growth rates cited in the International



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Monetary Fund's latest report released in March, 2007, as shown in the table on the following page.

The IMF report commented that "despite a difficult security environment and persistent expenditure pressures,

Afghanistan's performance during the first six months of 2006/07 (fiscal year starts on March 21) was in line with the program. The authorities met all the end-September 2006 quantitative performance criteria and indicative targets, the structural performance criterion, and most structural benchmarks, except those related to the state-owned banks."

Other measures may be found in the report of the Canadian Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and International Aid which has already been tabled before you and which do not therefore require further comment.

We therefore conclude, from our examination of data at both the micro and macro levels, that significant progress has been made and is being made.

Nonetheless, we have a great deal further to go before we can consider the task of reconstructing Afghanistan to have been completed.

#### **ASSESSING THE DANGER OF PREMATURE WITHDRAWAL**

This, then, brings us to the question of what would happen if we and ISAF were to withdraw from Afghanistan before the task is finished.

Year	GDP Growth Rate	Gross Domestic Capital Formation	Exports of Goods Growth Rate
2002/3	28.6%	34.5%	-
2003/4	15.7%	42.0%	36.2%
2004/5	8.0%	43.3%	21.3%
2005/6	14.0%	38.7%	21.7%
2006/7	8.0%	41.3%	13.3%
2007/8e	12.0%	36.1%	18.3%

Here, the question centres on the capacity of the fragile state to provide the security needed to allow development to continue growing along its successful path.

And here is the crucial problem—the balance of the financial resources of the Afghanistan

national government against those available to the anti-government forces seeking to overthrow it.

The International Monetary Fund's report, already cited, shows the domestic tax and non-tax revenues of the Afghan national government at 4.5% of GDP in 2003/4, and projected to rise to only 6.8% of GDP in 2007/8.

Grants for operating and development purposes, flowing through the government accounts from international Organizations (IOs) amounted to 4.6% of GDP in 2003/4 and are projected to be 6.8% of GDP in 2007/8; raising the Central Government Revenues from 9.1% of GDP in 2003/4 to a projected 13.6% of GDP in 2007/8.

In addition, sums such as those from USAID and Japan were also directed to projects outside the government's accounts.

Clearly, the financial capacity of the Afghanistan government would be hopelessly weak without the support of the international donor community.

Set against this are the funds at the disposal of the anti-government forces—especially those coming from opium and heroin production. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2005* reported that the total export value of opium to neighbouring countries amounted to \$2.7 billion dollars. Of that sum, the farmers received about 20% or



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about \$560 million, with the drug traffickers retaining \$2.14 billion, or about 80% of the total export value.

A more recent study done jointly by the World Bank and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime entitled *Afghanistan's Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics, and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*, estimated the current export value of the Afghanistan opium and heroin production at \$US 3 billion, accounting for 92% of global production of opium and heroin, and for one third of total economic activity in Afghanistan.

That study also traced a consolidation process in the Afghanistan narcotics industry with increasing centralized control. The study also traced the effects of this process, with part of the proceeds of the narcotics industry used to bribe and corrupt public officials, and part to fund the counter-government forces.

In his briefing to the United Nations Security Council on March 20, 2007, the Executive Director of UNODC stated that "In the south, the vicious circle of drugs funding terrorism and terrorists supporting drug traffickers is stronger than ever. In other words, opium cultivation in the south of the country is less a narcotic issue and more a matter of insurgency, so it is vital to fight them both together."

If ISAF Forces were to withdraw, we believe that the great disparity in financial resources between the drug traffickers and the Afghan national government (6.8% of GDP for the government and 33% of GDP for the traffickers) would ensure the complete overthrow of Afghan national government forces in the South, and the country would

be quickly pitched back into civil war, with at best a decline into regional warlord control, and at worst the coming to power of a neo-Taliban structure dependent upon the monies to be provided by the drug traffickers. .

Afghanistan would evolve from a Narco-Economy to a neo-Taliban Narco-State, with the prospect of the return of human rights abuses that existed under the Taliban and Al-Qaeda training camps, and the destruction of everything that we have invested in Afghanistan over the last six years.

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