



*The Conference of Defence Associations*  
*Executive Director's Focus Brief*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Re: Report of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan**

The final report of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan, headed by John Manley, has been released. The full report and copies of all submissions made to the panel are available online at:

<http://www.independent-panel-independant.ca/>

The Conference of Defence Associations (CDA) welcomes this very important document. After reviewing the report, the CDA has concluded that it is a sober and even-handed assessment of Canada's role thus far in the Afghan mission, and provides a compelling vision for the future. It presents a set of important recommendations, many in line with the CDA's own proposals made in the past and in its own submission to the panel, that build upon the good work already accomplished in Afghanistan.

The report both praises and is critical of several components of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Its recommendations that Canada continue its good work are also accompanied by specific suggestions for improving Canada's and the international community's efforts in that country. Most notable are:

- Canada should "continue with its responsibility for security in Kandahar beyond February 2009 . . . including its combat role, but with increasing emphasis on training the Afghan National Security Forces expeditiously to take lead responsibility for security in Kandahar and Afghanistan as a whole" (p. 37). However, the report notes that it is impossible to separate "training" and "combat" roles: ". . . in reality, training and mentoring Afghan forces means sometimes conducting combat operations with them" (p. 30). The CDA agrees.
- A greater and more comprehensive political-military strategy and commitment from NATO;
- Avoiding the use of artificial deadlines: "Ending Canada's military contribution in Kandahar is therefore not a matter of setting artificial deadlines in time. It is a matter of making real progress in the context of events on the ground" (p. 32);
- A call for the Prime Minister to take personal charge of the Afghan file, supported by a cabinet-level committee and a single task force directing and coordinating the activities of all departments involved (p. 37), injecting greater political and bureaucratic commitment into the file.

We hope that the Government and its departments will take this report as constructive criticism. We also hope that political leaders, civil society and Canadians in general use the

report to inform themselves of the complexity of the mission. Notably, the report views Afghanistan as a test of Canada's commitment to the international community:

"For the first time in many years, we have brought a level of commitment to an international problem that gives us real weight and credibility . . . We like to talk about Canada's role in the world. Well, we have a meaningful one in Afghanistan." (p. 5)

The CDA's submission to the panel can be viewed online at:

[http://www.cda-cdai.ca/Policy\\_Statements/IndepPanelAfghanistanNov2007.pdf](http://www.cda-cdai.ca/Policy_Statements/IndepPanelAfghanistanNov2007.pdf)

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