Focus
Canada officially put itself on a war footing with Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents operating in southern Afghanistan in late 2005 when the initial wave of Canadian land forces arrived to lay the groundwork for Operation Archer. By early March 2006, four Canadians were dead and over 20 others were wounded in and around Kandahar. This News in Review module looks at Canada’s war in Afghanistan.

Introduction
They were sent to wage war and dispel the myth of peacekeepers in blue helmets. Canadians troops landed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in late 2005 to wage war on Taliban and Al Qaeda militants who continue to wreak havoc in the southern region of the country. Despite ongoing efforts by close to 20 000 U.S. soldiers stationed near Kandahar since the fall of 2001, the Taliban and their Al Qaeda counterparts refuse to submit. Roadside bombings, landmines, and suicide attacks are being used to inflict as much damage on coalition troops as possible. With the American decision to reduce their troop presence by almost 4 000, Canada offered to pick up some of the slack, vowing to deploy 2 300 soldiers to the region as part of Operation Archer—Canada’s new mission in Afghanistan. The difference between this mission and others: the Canadians are there to do combat with the enemy. In fact, Canada’s top soldier, General Rick Hillier sought to distance the Canadian Forces from the ideal of the altruistic peacekeeper when he told the media, “We’re not the public service of Canada; we’re not just another department. We are in the Canadian Forces, and our job is to be able to kill people” (The Globe and Mail, July 15, 2005).

Hillier’s strong words served as a wake-up call for many Canadians who underestimate the dangers that soldiers face every day while patrolling hostile territories like southern Afghanistan. According to Hillier, Canada is at war with terrorists, whom he refers to as “detestable murderers and scumbags.” Critics claim that the emphasis on combat compromises Canada’s “3 D” approach in Afghanistan—a blend of defence, diplomacy, and development. Others feel that Canada’s image as a peacekeeping nation will be severely tarnished in light of the more militaristic approach of Hillier and the top brass in Ottawa. But the Canadian Forces are reluctant to lay low and hope that terrorist groups like Al Qaeda will simply leave Canada alone. They also point out that the overwhelming majority of Afghan citizens want foreign troops in their country to keep the warlords and insurgents in check. However, while the citizenry supports the coalition’s efforts, the mere presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan is enough to make anyone in an army uniform a target for militants and terrorists.

Hillier’s perspective took on increasing significance in January 2006 when a military convoy was attacked by a suicide bomber. Canada’s top diplomat in Afghanistan, Glyn Berry, was killed in the bombing, and three others, Cpl. Jeffrey Bailey, Pte. William Salikin, and Master Cpl. Paul Franklin, were seriously wounded. The four were travelling in a G-Wagon light armoured vehicle when the suicide bomber swerved his explosive-laden car into them, detonating the deadly payload at the point of impact. Franklin, a trained medic, provided medical treatment for his wounded comrades despite the fact that his left leg had been severed below the knee and his right leg (which he would also lose after efforts to save it failed) was severely broken.
The tragedy sent shock waves through the ranks of Canadian Forces personnel serving in Kandahar and abroad. Meanwhile, the Canadian public began to examine the mission in Afghanistan more closely. Suddenly people started to pay attention to warnings about inherent dangers involved in the Kandahar theatre. Reports of a spike in suicide bombings—25 in a four-month period prior to Glyn Berry’s death—penetrated the Canadian consciousness. The public learned that there was only one road connecting Canadians stationed with the Multinational Brigade at Kandahar Airfield and their comrades in the city of Kandahar. That road is where Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents have struck most frequently with either suicide bombers or improvised explosive devices (IED). This road is so dangerous that the military refer to it as “IED alley.” On top of this, southern Afghanistan was virtually lawless, with warlords constantly undermining the public good—and the region had grown dependent on poppy farming to fuel the illegal worldwide trade of opium and heroin. It soon became clear that Canada had signed on to serve in the hot zone of the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Before Canadians could digest this information, fresh reports of Canadian casualties streamed out of Kandahar. In two separate incidents in February, four Canadians were injured when a roadside bomb exploded near their vehicle, and two more were injured when their G-Wagon rolled over near Kandahar. Then in early March a flurry of reports surfaced with three incidents occurring in a three-day stretch. The first resulted in the deaths of Cpl. Paul Davis and Master Cpl. Timothy Wilson and the injury of five others. The soldiers were traveling in a LAV III armoured vehicle that struck an oncoming taxi and then rolled over twice before coming to rest on its wheels. The second incident saw five Canadian soldiers injured when a suicide bomber drove his explosive-packed car into a Canadian military convoy. The Taliban laid claim to the bombing. The third incident occurred in a small village north of Kandahar. Canadian troops were meeting with village elders when talks were interrupted by a young man shouting “Allahu Akbar” (God is great). Within an instant the man swung a half-metre-long axe, striking Lieut. Trevor Greene in the head. Canadian soldiers responded by firing 14 bullets into the assailant before turning their attention to a nearby riverbank where militants had taken position and opened fire on the coalition troops. The axe attack was a prelude to a firefight that saw Canadian and Afghan soldiers ward off the ambush. Greene was airlifted from the scene in serious but stable condition.

Despite the best intentions of Canadian Forces personnel serving in Kandahar, they are being targeted and attacked by insurgents hostile to the rebuilding of Afghanistan by foreign powers. Some experts think that Canada’s nation-building efforts in Afghanistan will require a long-term commitment, perhaps 20 or 30 years. The Department of National Defence is now telling Canadians that our forces are in their most dangerous combat role since the Korean War. Subject to guerrilla attacks from a determined enemy, Canadian troops soldier on in Kandahar. One hope remains: that Canadians will not have to bear witness to a parade of flag-draped coffins being loaded onto military planes for transport home to grieving families.
Analysis

1. What is meant by the phrase “the myth of the peacekeepers in blue helmets”?

2. What is Operation Archer?

3. Read the Rick Hillier quote at the end of the first paragraph. Do you agree with his statement or do you think he is being too dramatic?

4. What happened in January 2006 to expose Canadians to the dangers of the Kandahar mission?

5. Identify at least two specific dangers that Canadian soldiers face in Kandahar.
AFGHANISTAN: CANADIANS PREPARE FOR WAR

Video Review

1. Where are Canadian troops currently serving in Afghanistan?

2. What is one of the main weapons used by Taliban guerillas?

3. What happened in January 2006 to bring the dangers of serving in Afghanistan to the forefront of the minds of Canadians?

4. Who was Glyn Berry? What job was he performing in Afghanistan for the Canadian government?

5. How many suicide bombings took place in a four-month period in late 2005 and early 2005? __________________

6. How many Canadians have died in Afghanistan over the last four years?

7. What threats do Canadian Forces personnel face from insurgents? What do our troops need to do to stay safe?

8. According to Sgt. Kevin Gregory, what is the hardest part about being a soldier?

9. How is the Afghanistan mission in Kandahar different from Canada’s previous mission in Kabul?

10. Military experts claim that the rebuilding of Afghanistan is going to take a long time. In your view, should Canada be involved in this mission? Explain.

---

Did you know . . .

Kandahar was home to the Taliban movement and the base of operations for Osama Bin Laden.
AFGHANISTAN: CANADIANS PREPARE FOR WAR

Operation Archer Fact Sheet

Mission name: Operation ARCHER – part of the Canadian Forces overall effort called Task Force Afghanistan and part of the U.S.-led war on terrorism called Operation Enduring Freedom

Location: Kandahar province – Canadians are stationed in the city of Kandahar and at the Kandahar Airfield, the headquarters for the Multinational Brigade.

Commander: Canadian Brigadier-General David Fraser is the Commander of the First Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group from Edmonton and the Commander of the Multinational Brigade for Regional Command South in Afghanistan

Deployment of Canadian Forces (CF) in Afghanistan:

- Total number of CF serving in Afghanistan – approximately 2300
  - 125 CF members stationed at the Multinational Brigade Headquarters (MNBHQ) at Kandahar Airfield, making up half of the MNBHQ staff. Other coalition nations represented: Australia, Denmark, Estonia, Romania, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States
  - 250 CF members make up the National Command Element (NCE) stationed at Kandahar Airfield
  - 300 CF members comprise the National Support Element (NSE)
  - 250 CF members are assigned to the Theatre Support Element (TSE)
  - 1000 CF members comprise a Battle Group made up primarily of soldiers from the First Battalion Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry of Edmonton. These troops are stationed at the Kandahar Airfield. Part of this group is the 250-member Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) that is working jointly with Canadian Foreign Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency to build ties with the community and help in the rebuilding process in Kandahar. The PRT has been in Kandahar since August 2005.
  - 70 medical personnel are stationed at the coalition hospital at Kandahar Airfield.
  - About 85 CF personnel also continue to serve in supporting roles in Kabul and Bagram.

Source: the Department of National Defence, www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=1703

Equipment:

- Bisons – an eight-wheeled armoured vehicle used as an infantry section carrier and in other support roles, e.g., in reconnaissance missions, as ambulances, in electronic warfare and as mortar platforms
- Coyote – armoured vehicle used for reconnaissance
- Iltis – a four-wheel-drive, light-utility, all-terrain vehicle; used for command, reconnaissance and communications; can also mount weapons or carry casualties
- LAV III – an eight-wheeled, heavily armoured troop carrier capable of handling a variety of armaments
- G-Wagon – an armoured tactical transport vehicle; used for regular and reserve units to transport personnel in field operations and training. Its official name is the Gelaendenwagen (made by Mercedes Benz). The G-Wagon was purchased by the Canadian military to replace the aging fleet of Iltis.
- Nyala – a four-wheel-drive, mine-hardened reconnaissance jeep designed to withstand blasts from two simultaneous anti-tank mine detonations

Source: www.cbc.ca/news/background/afghanistan/cdnequipment.html

Operation Archer Casualties:

- Dead: 4 (three soldiers and one Canadian diplomat)
- Wounded: 21 soldiers

Coalition Deaths in Afghanistan since 2001:
- United States: 216
- Canada: 11
- United Kingdom: 5
- Denmark: 3
- Germany: 2
AFGHANISTAN: CANADIANS PREPARE FOR WAR

Timeline: Canada in Afghanistan - 2001-2006

For the dates on this timeline, circle three that you think are most important and be prepared to explain your selection. Consider keeping the timeline up to date from here. (Source: www.cbc.ca/news/background/afghanistan/timeline.html)

**October 10, 2001** The U.S. and British launch air strikes on Afghanistan almost a month after the September 11 attacks on targets in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. The goal of the campaign is to undermine the Taliban leadership of Afghanistan and eventually find terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden.

**October 17, 2001** Canada launches Operation Apollo, part of an international campaign against terrorism, by deploying the HMCS Charlottetown, HMCS Iroquois, and supply ship Preserver to the Arabian Sea. Ground troops follow in the early winter of 2002.

**January 25, 2002** Canada re-establishes diplomatic ties with Afghanistan for the first time since 1979.

**February 2, 2002** One hundred and forty members of the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry land in Afghanistan. The number of soldiers grows to 750 in the months to follow as Canada’s involvement in Operation Apollo continues.

**April 18, 2002** Four Canadians soldiers are killed and eight more wounded when a U.S. pilot mistakenly drops a bomb on them during nighttime training exercises near Kandahar.

**February 12, 2003** Defence Minister John McCallum announces Canada will send two rotations of more than 1 000 soldiers to join the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul. The Department of National Defence refers to the mission as Operation Athena.

**July 17, 2003** Canadian Brig.-Gen. Peter J. Devlin takes command of the 19-nation Kabul Multinational Brigade. A contingent of 1 800 Canadian troops join his ranks. Their mission: to maintain order in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

**October 2, 2003** Two Canadian soldiers, Sgt. Robert Alan Short, 42, of Fredericton and Cpl. Robbie Christopher Beerenfenger, 29, of Ottawa, are killed and three others are injured in a roadside bombing near Kabul.

**January 27, 2004** A suicide bomber kills Cpl. Jamie Murphy and wounds three others while they are on patrol near the Canada’s Camp Julien in Kabul. Murphy was just days away from heading back to Canada.

**February 9, 2004** Canadian Lt.-Gen. Rick Hillier takes command of ISAF in Kabul.

**April 15, 2004** Prime Minister Paul Martin announces that Canada’s military presence in Afghanistan will be maintained until at least the summer of 2005.

**July 26, 2004** About 600 troops head to Afghanistan.

**August 5, 2004** Canada’s Royal 22nd Regiment (nicknamed the Van Doos) finish their tour of duty. The 700 soldiers complete 3 500 patrols and help in 154 “do-good” projects that result in the building of schools, orphanages, roads, and other public works projects.

**Feb. 10, 2005** A new six-month tour begins for 700 Canadian troops in Kabul.

**May 17, 2005** Canada commits to sending up to 1 250 troops to the
Kandahar region in southern Afghanistan. This marks the beginning of Operation Archer. At the same time, the process of dismantling Operation Athena is initiated.

**July 15, 2005** Six months after his promotion to the position of Chief of the Defence Staff, Hillier warns Canadians of the dangers inherent in the combat mission to Kandahar. In his news conference, Hillier refers to terrorists as “detestable murderers and scumbags.”

**August 5, 2005** Canadian soldiers begin shutting down Camp Julien near Kabul in order to prepare to move to Canada’s new mission in Kandahar. Meanwhile, Canadian Forces provide security in the lead-up to Afghanistan’s parliamentary elections in September.

**October 18, 2005** Operation Athena officially comes to an end. By the beginning of December, personnel and equipment used in Kabul are in place in Kandahar as part of Operation Archer. In turn, Camp Julien is turned over to Afghanistan’s Ministry of Defence.

**November 24, 2005** A Canadian soldier is killed and four others are injured when their LAV III armoured vehicle rolls over near Kandahar.

**December 12, 2005** Three Canadian soldiers and a British journalist are injured when a roadside bomb strikes their G-Wagon light armoured vehicle near Kandahar.

**January 15, 2006** Canada’s top diplomat in Afghanistan, Glyn Berry, is killed, and three Canadian soldiers are injured after a suicide bomber attacks a military convoy near Kandahar. The wounded, Cpl. Jeffrey Bailey, Pte. William Salikin, and Master Cpl. Paul Franklin, are airlifted to Germany for medical treatment.

**February 9, 2006** Four Canadians suffer minor injuries when a roadside bomb explodes near their vehicle.

**February 15, 2006** Two Canadian soldiers are injured when their G-Wagon rolls over in Kandahar.

**February 16, 2006** Canadian troops defuse a large roadside bomb outside Kandahar.

**February 24, 2006** Canada’s Princess Patricia’s Light Infantry takes over frontline duties in Kandahar province from U.S. troops.

**February 25, 2006** Two rocket-propelled grenades are fired at a Canadian military patrol near Kandahar, injuring a Canadian soldier.

**February 28, 2006** Canadian Brig.-Gen. David Fraser takes over command of the Multinational Brigade in southern Afghanistan from his U.S. counterpart.

**March 2, 2006** Cpl. Paul Davis and Master Cpl. Timothy Wilson are killed and four others are injured after their LAV III strikes another vehicle and then rolls over twice before coming to rest. The incident is deemed an accident by Canadian military investigators.

**March 3, 2006** Five Canadian soldiers are injured when a suicide bomber rams his explosive-laden car into a four-vehicle Canadian military convoy. The convoy was transporting investigators looking into the death of Canadian diplomat Glyn Berry.

**March 4, 2006** Lieut. Trevor Greene is seriously wounded when a man strikes him in the head with an axe. Greene, who was unarmored at the time, was meeting with tribal elders in an effort to build alliances with villagers north of Kandahar. The attack on Greene is the prelude to a skirmish that sees Canadian and Afghan forces repel the hostile efforts of local militants. Besides Greene, no other Canadians are wounded in the incident.
AFGHANISTAN: CANADIANS PREPARE FOR WAR

General Hillier Speaks Out

Canada’s Chief of the Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, took charge of the Canadian Forces in the winter of 2005. One of the things that Hillier sought to do from the start was to toughen up the image of the Canadian military. His goal was to turn Canadians away from the idea that the Canadian Forces are just a peacekeeping outfit that is seldom involved in conflict.

Read the Hillier quotes below and complete the activity that follows.

“We’re not the public service of Canada; we’re not just another department. We are the Canadian Forces, and our job is to be able to kill people.” (July 15, 2005)*

“Canadians don’t realize how great their soldiers are. They can find the bad guys and take them out, and they can find the good guys and support them.” (August 13, 2004)**

“We have to start . . . treating Canada as an operational theatre.” (March 3, 2005)**

“You’ve got to be seen as capable and seen as too big a bully to take on.” (May 30, 2005)**

“Osama bin Laden, some time ago, indicated Canada was a target. As a responsible citizen of the world, we have been involved in the campaign against terrorism, and, of course, we try to bring stability to places that are unstable and therefore have acted as hotbeds for supporting terrorism. All that, I think, does make us a target.” (July 11, 2005)***

“‘These are detestable murderers and scumbags, I’ll tell you that right up front. They detest our freedoms, they detest our society, they detest our liberties.” Referring to Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents (July 15, 2005)*

“We’re not going to let those radical murderers and killers rob from others and certainly we’re not going to let them rob from Canada.” Referring to the Taliban and Al Qaeda (July 15, 2005)*

“Did they say, ‘No we might be attacked over here if we actually stand up against those despicable murderers and bastards?’ No, they did not.” — referring to Canada’s willingness to do battle with the Nazis in the Second World War (July 15, 2005)*

“We’re not cold-hearted warriors who do things in a ruthless manner, but we can . . . and will do what’s necessary. What we’re always trying to do is make life better for people.” (July 30, 2005)**

“You’re living with people who desperately want you there—and the Afghans do. I mean, they say: ‘The only thing between us and chaos again is you.’” (March 3, 2006)****

“We’ve taken casualties on every mission we’ve been on . . . You simply cannot sit down and formulate any percentage that you might or might not expect in terms of casualties. So what you do is shape and learn and reduce the risk to the lowest level . . . but you cannot project.” (March 3, 2006)****

Did you know . . .

Canadians have been active not only in fighting in Afghanistan but in supervising elections, doing aid work, and serving on medical missions to remote villages.
“We have to be very careful in the perception we create. And that includes taking some risk initially and being out amongst that population. You cannot do your job in an armoured fighting vehicle going at high speed to an area, weaving in and out with your helmet on, your sunglasses on, you’re quickly seen at best as an irritant, bringing no or little value, and you go from benign hostility to hostility to where people will actually attack you. . . . You gotta have your sunglasses off and look ’em in the eye, so they see you as people, and see you as people who are there to help them.” — on Canada’s mission in Afghanistan (March 3, 2006)****

Sources:
* “JTF2 to Hunt Al Qaeda” – The Globe and Mail, July 15, 2005
**“He’s Armoured but He’s not Thick” – The Globe and Mail, July 30, 2005
*** “‘Detestable Murderers and Scumbags’ – Making Sense of Canada’s Deployment in Afghanistan” – Briarpatch, December 2005
****General Hillier speaks to the Globe on Afghanistan – The Globe and Mail, March 6, 2006

To Do
According to retired Major-General Lewis MacKenzie, Rick Hillier never opens his mouth without asking, “Who is my target audience?” Re-read the quotes and complete the following activity.

Beside each quote, identify Hillier’s audience. Your choices: the Canadian Forces, the Canadian public, terrorists around the world, politicians in Ottawa, our U.S. allies. You can identify more than one target audience for each quote.

Pick three quotes and explain your selection of a target audience(s). Be prepared to share your explanation with the class.

Do you think General Hillier is the right man to lead the Afghanistan mission? Explain.
AFGHANISTAN: CANADIANS PREPARE FOR WAR

A New Commitment to War

Aisha Ahmad is a freelance columnist for cbc.ca in Pakistan and Afghanistan. She is currently working on her doctorate with research focusing on the disarmament of warlords in Afghanistan and security in the post-Taliban period. She submitted this column to cbc.ca in the summer of 2005.

Canadian troops in Kandahar:
A new commitment to war

A small village in rural Kandahar province where heavily armed villagers cultivate poppies for illicit narcotics trafficking

War in Afghanistan is not a casual affair. Afghan fighters, famous for their prowess in guerrilla tactics, have a notorious reputation for ruthlessness with their enemies. Insurgents are known for their resiliency, tenacity, and patience, and have a history of winning wars by stomaching horrific casualties and wearing down their enemies over years of resistance. As our troops head south to Afghanistan's troubled province of Kandahar, Canada risks becoming embroiled in a long-term conflict in the turbulent country.

Under a new NATO mandate, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops will expand their presence into the countryside, which is currently in a state of political anarchy and warlord rule. Afghan President Hamid Karzai welcomed Canadian troops into the troubled southern regions, where the central government is largely impotent and under attack. The Pashtun-dominated south remains the stronghold of fierce Taliban and anti-government resistance.

However, many Afghans living in Kandahar province claim they are satisfied with the American military and the international presence, which keeps violent warlords and powerful militia commanders restrained from widespread human rights abuse against local populations.

“They [the Americans] have created stability. We are happy because they have stopped the fighting,” reported village women living in the rural districts in Kandahar province.

“But we also do not want them for very long.”

Afghanistan's southern region includes vast expanses of desert mountains, often covered in unexploded landmines.

However, according to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and several government officials, it would be lethal for international forces to leave Afghanistan in its current state.

“The present structure will not stand,” explains AIHRC Director Abdul Qadi Noorzai in Kandahar. “The current Afghan central authority is unable to maintain stability and human rights without the international presence.”

 “[The presence of] international military forces means it is not possible to fall back into civil war,” argues Ramadan Bashar Dost, former minister of planning. “If international forces leave Afghanistan, there will be a war within 10 minutes.”

But sending Canadian troops to the countryside to fight insurgency is only

Did you know . . .
Long before Operation Archer, Canadian elite commandos of the Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) were in the country and taking part in highly dangerous, aggressive, secret operations against Taliban and Al Qaeda forces.
a short-term solution to Afghanistan’s complex problem of political insecurity.

In fact, in many ways coalition forces have actually undermined the future of long-term peace in Afghanistan. Throughout their campaign against extremism, U.S. forces have armed and financed Northern Alliance militia men to fight against seasoned insurgents, in order to avoid risking their own soldiers in the brutal mountains. These militia commanders and warlords have taken control of the countryside with their renewed power bases, and given their grisly human-rights records, now present the greatest risk to Afghanistan’s political future.

By engaging in aggressive and sweeping search-and-detain operations, coalition forces have also alienated former militiamen who fought against the Taliban during the gritty turf battles in the south. These one-time U.S. allies confided such an intense animosity toward the government and foreign forces that they were willing to take up guns in resistance.

“We feel the government hates us,” said one ex-combatant, Pahlawan, speaking on behalf of a group of anti-Taliban militiamen from Kandahar province. “We feel disrespected, degraded, and oppressed, especially by the Americans.”

Almost three decades of war have destroyed much of the physical infrastructure.

The burgeoning and widespread anti-American sentiment in the southern regions of Afghanistan also raises concerns for Canadian troops fighting under a new, shared command structure with U.S. troops in Kandahar. Many ordinary Pashtuns have sympathized with the anti-American insur-

rection after repeated incidents of Qu’ran desecration at American military prisons and reports of ongoing arbitrary arrest and indefinite detention of suspected militants, without any legal recourse.

Until now, Canadian peacekeepers haven’t been involved in the controversial methods the Americans have employed against extremism. But even though the new Canadian contingent is officially considered a NATO peacekeeping and reconstruction mission, our troops will also be directly assisting U.S. forces with aggressive anti-insurgent and reconnaissance activities. The expanded mission in Afghanistan is a drastic shift in Canada’s participation in the war, which dangerously blurs the distinction between Canadian peacekeepers and U.S. military forces.

“For the Afghan people, there is not really a distinction between NATO or Americans or ISAF,” said President Karzai at a press conference in Kabul.

Afghan society, while welcoming and hospitable to foreign guests, has a history of fierce xenophobia and violent resistance against international occupation. The new commitment of troops in Kandahar puts Canadians under a blazing spotlight in Afghanistan’s troubled and murky terrain.

In a country where military allegiances change overnight, allies join forces with their sworn enemies, and duplicity, betrayal, and treachery are the laws of war, our small contingent of Canadian troops has engaged itself in a deeply complicated and long-term conflict. Tribal wars, ethnic conflicts, blood feuds, sectarian violence, militia power struggles, and anti-government resistance all contribute to Afghanistan’s chaotic and confusing landscape. Violence in the south is often

Did you know . . .
In 2005, fighting in the Kandahar area resulted in 1,600 deaths, including those of 91 American soldiers.
falsely identified as insurgency or terrorism, as a cheap guise for skirmishes between rival militia factions bidding for power.

In recent weeks, anti-government violence in the south has steadily increased. Resistance fighters have assassinated opponents, kidnapped and killed pro-government and foreign agents, and shot and decapitated their enemies. Despite efforts at disarmament, over 120,000 illegal militiamen still dominate Afghanistan’s rural lands. Afghan society is heavily armed and has no genuine sense of loyalty to coalition forces. Since the British invasion and the Soviet expansion, Afghanistan has been the battlefield of many bloody and senseless proxy wars. Canadians must be mindful of the deep-seated suspicion that foreigners have earned, especially those wearing uniforms. History has proven that no matter how divided and fragmented Afghanistan may be, every ethnic and tribal faction in the country will join forces under the banner of nationalism and religion against a common foreign enemy.

To maintain our international reputations as a peacekeeping nation, Canadians forces joining ranks with American soldiers must win the confidence of the Pashtun people in the south, who are increasingly wary of the seemingly dubious international agenda in Afghanistan.

Source: www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_ahmad/20050803.html

To Consider

1. How does Canada risk becoming embroiled in a long-term conflict in Afghanistan?

2. Are coalition forces welcomed by most people in Afghanistan? Explain your answer.

3. How have coalition forces unwittingly undermined the future of long-term peace in Afghanistan?

4. Why is there widespread anti-American sentiment in the southern regions of Afghanistan? What dangers might this create for Canadians?

5. Describe the chaos and confusion that dominates southern Afghanistan.

6. What is the key to maintaining our reputation as a peacekeeping nation if we are to succeed in Kandahar province?

7. At this point, what do you think will be the likely future of Canada’s mission to Afghanistan? Be specific and detailed.
Troops serving overseas often feel isolated and cut off from home. This is why the Department of National Defence (DND) encourages Canadians to write to troops serving Canada overseas. Your task is to post a message or write a postcard/letter to Canadian troops assigned to Operation Archer in Kandahar, Afghanistan. In your message, be sure to:

- Identify who you are and why you are writing.
- Tell the soldier what you know about their mission.
- Tell them that you wish them all the best and hope for their safe return at the end of their tour.
- Thank them for their service.

**Post a Message**

There are two ways to write to soldiers serving overseas. One way is to access the DND Web site www.forces.gc.ca/site/community/messageboard/index_e.asp. Click on the “Post a Message” button and post your message. You may even want to type up your message first and then cut and paste it into the message box. Ask your teacher if this is something that will work for you.

If you have problems accessing the site, use a search engine and type in the keywords: “Canada” “DND” “write our troops”

**Write a Postcard or Letter**

The other way to write to troops serving overseas is to send a postcard or letter to the Canadian Forces base in Belleville, Ontario. In turn, the Canadian Forces personnel will deliver what you have written to soldiers serving in Kandahar.

Any Canadian Soldier

**OP ARCHER**

PO Box 5058 Stn Forces
Belleville ON
K8N 5W6

Keep in mind that what you write is designed to boost the morale of Canadian women and men serving in a very dangerous mission in Afghanistan. It does not mean that you have to be in favour of the mission itself.

**Notes:**