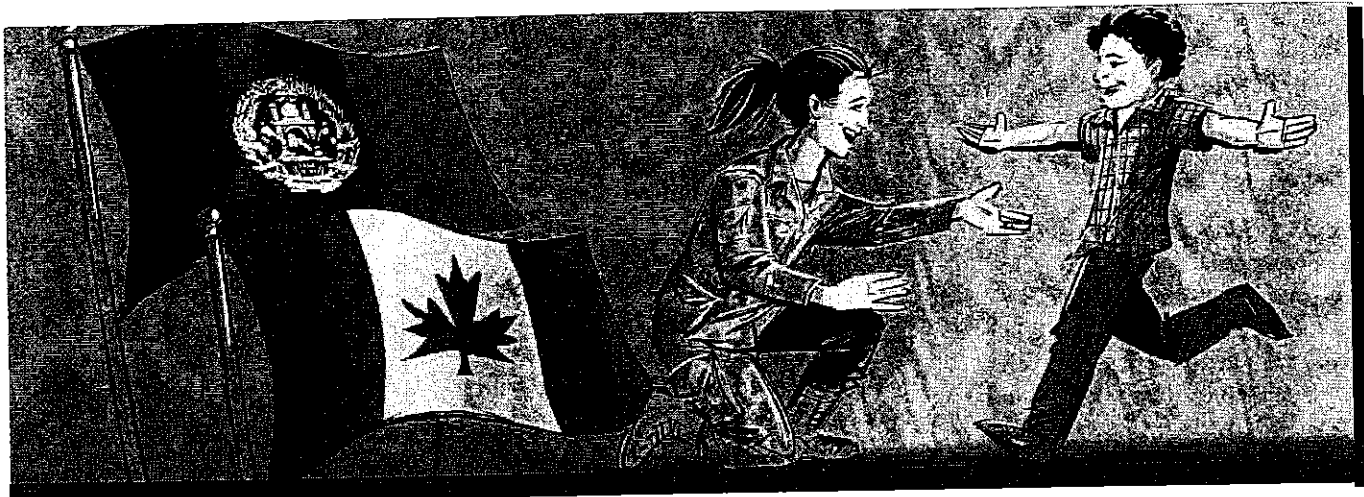


NATIONAL GOODBYE, AFGHANISTAN



The last 84 Canadian soldiers to serve in Afghanistan left the troubled South Asian nation for good and arrived safely in Ottawa on March 18. Their military airplane was escorted by fighter jets – and their arrival signalled the end of the longest military engagement in Canada’s history.

“Welcome home and job well done,” said Prime Minister Stephen Harper as he greeted the troops. “Thank you to all members of the Canadian Armed Forces, to those who served in Afghanistan and those who made it possible for them to serve.”

THE ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

Canadian troops were first sent to Afghanistan in 2001, shortly after the September 11 attacks against the United States. The reason? To

join American and British troops in attacking Taliban forces.

The coalition wanted to remove the Taliban from power because this government had allowed Osama bin Laden – the head of al-Qaeda and the mastermind behind the terrorist attacks – to live and train in Afghanistan.

THE ISAF IS FORMED

By December 2001, the Taliban had been overthrown and a new government had been installed. However, not all the troops returned home. Many – including soldiers from Canada – remained behind to become part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) led by NATO.

At its peak, the ISAF consisted of more than 100,000 military personnel and

civilians from 40 countries, including nearly 3,000 from Canada. Its job? To bring stability to Afghanistan.

MANY ROLES FOR THE ISAF

Although the Taliban was no longer in power, many members and supporters of the former government remained in the country. Together with al-Qaeda, they were continuing to launch regular attacks against soldiers and civilians, hoping to prevent the new Afghan government from succeeding.

DID YOU KNOW?
 Since 2001, more than 3,000 coalition troops have been killed in Afghanistan.

ISAF soldiers did more than police dangerous areas and fight insurgents, however. Some helped rebuild schools,

DEFINITIONS

- AL-QAEDA:** a strongly anti-Western worldwide terrorist group
- COALITION:** a group of people, groups, or countries who have joined together for a common purpose
- INSURGENTS:** a group of people fighting to take control of their country by force
- NATO:** the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an international organization composed of the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom and European countries, formed for security purposes

- SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS:** refers to September 11, 2001 when al-Qaeda hijackers flew two passenger jets into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, causing them to collapse. On the same day, a third hijacked jet was flown into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and a fourth crashed in a Pennsylvania field. Some 3,000 people died as a result of the attacks.
- TALIBAN:** fundamentalist Islamic government that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until December, 2001



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hospitals and critical **infrastructure** that had been destroyed during 30 years of **civil war**. Others helped train the Afghan police and army so these groups could keep the peace after international forces left.

The ISAF also assisted the Afghan government in finding and **decommissioning** 10,000 heavy weapons, such as artillery, tanks and rocket launchers, so that they wouldn't fall into the wrong hands. As well, Canadian soldiers helped clear about one-third of the estimated 10 to 15 million landmines buried in Afghanistan.

In 2010, when the Afghan government felt its own forces could provide adequate security, the ISAF's mission began winding down and Canada's combat soldiers left. However, some Canadian Forces remained in the country to take part in a final training mission for Afghan police that ended this year.

WAS IT WORTH IT?

In all, more than 40,000 Canadian soldiers served in Afghanistan, mainly in **Kandahar Province** and Kabul, the capital, over a 12-year period. During that time, Canada lost 158 soldiers, one diplomat, one journalist and two civilian contractors. The financial cost of Canada's Afghanistan contribution: an estimated \$12 billion.

Was Canada's involvement in the South Asian country worth this price tag? In many ways, daily life in Afghanistan has improved as a result of Canadian and international efforts.

Life expectancy is now higher, more babies are being born healthy, and more children are attending school, for instance. However, the violence has not stopped, the Taliban was not defeated, and the progress that has been made is not irreversible. For that reason it's important, said Major-General Dean Milner, the last Canadian commander in Afghanistan, that the West continue to nurture both military and civilian institutions even after troops have been withdrawn.

A JOB WELL DONE

Some foreign troops will remain in Afghanistan till the end of 2014 – and if the Afghan President agrees, some may remain beyond that date to conduct counter-terror operations and to continue to support and train Afghan forces. Canada's mission, however, officially ended on March 31, and Prime Minister Harper has declared May 9 a National Day of Honour to recognize Canada's significant military contributions in Afghanistan.

"Your strength has protected the weak. Your bravery has brought hope to the hopeless," stated Deborah Lyons, the Canadian ambassador to Afghanistan, during a farewell ceremony for Canada's last departing soldiers on March 12. "The helping hand you have extended to the Afghan people has given them faith that a better future is within their grasp." ★

ABOUT AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a land of both mountains and plains. The country experiences cold winters and hot summers and is often threatened by earthquakes and floods.

At 652,225 square kilometres, the nation is about as large as Manitoba. Most of the 33.4 million people belong to one of four main ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Aimak.

About 99 percent of the population is Muslim. The country's legal system is based on Shariah law, a strict form of Islamic rule taken from the Koran. Hamid Karzai, president since 2001, was re-elected in 2009 amidst widespread reports of violence and intimidation, low voter turnout, ballot stuffing, and other electoral fraud.

Afghanistan is one of the world's least developed countries. In 2012, it ranked 175 out of 187 nations. Overall, life expectancy is about 49 years, and about 40 percent of the population is unemployed.

DEFINITIONS

CIVIL WAR: a war between two or more groups inside one country

DECOMMISSIONING: making (a weapon) inoperative

FRAUD: wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain

INFRASTRUCTURE: the basic equipment and structures (such as roads and bridges) that are needed for a country

KANDAHAR PROVINCE: a region in southern Afghanistan, and the birthplace of the Taliban



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ON THE LINES

Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. What is the population of Afghanistan?

2. List at least four other important facts about Afghanistan.

3. When and why did Canada send soldiers to Afghanistan?

MAP MAP ASSIGNMENT

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *Goodbye, Afghanistan*.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map after all labelling is completed. (5)
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink. (5)
4. Work carefully and neatly. (5)

Resources Required: pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

Part A Locate and label the following countries in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated: (8)

India (brown)	Pakistan (purple)
Afghanistan (yellow)	Iran (green)
Iraq (yellow)	
Kyrgyzstan (green)	Turkmenistan (brown)
Uzbekistan (orange)	

Part C Locate and label the following countries in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated: (12)

Nepal (orange)	China (red)
Kazakhstan (yellow)	Russia (purple)
Georgia (pink)	Armenia (orange)
Azerbaijan (red)	Turkey (brown)
Syria (purple)	
Oman (brown)	
Yemen (green)	Saudi Arabia (red)

Part D Locate and label the following and shade all ocean water dark blue: (3)

Indian Ocean	Arabian Sea
Persian Gulf	

Part E Locate and label the following bodies of fresh water and shade them light blue: (2)

Caspian Sea	Aral Sea
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Part F Shade all remaining territory grey. (2)

Part G Complete your map with a frame, title and compass bearing. ★ (3)

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Afghanistan



0 150 300 450 600 750 Kilometres