



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA**

**CANADA'S MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN:
INITIAL REPORT**

**Report of the Special Committee on the Canadian
Mission in Afghanistan**

**Pierre Lemieux, MP
Chair**

JUNE 2008

39th PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION



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THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied Canada's mission in Afghanistan and has agreed to report the following:

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THE CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN: INITIAL REPORT JUNE 2008

INTRODUCTION

On 13 March 2008, a motion was passed in the House of Commons which specified changes to the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, and also included a description and mandate for a special Parliamentary committee on Afghanistan. On 8 April 2008, the House of Commons unanimously supported a motion “that a special committee be appointed to consider the Canadian mission in Afghanistan as referred to in the motion adopted by the House on 13 March 2008.”

The purpose of that committee as described in the motion of 13 March was to:

- a. meet regularly with key ministers and senior officials;
- b. travel to Afghanistan and the surrounding region;
- c. make “frequent” recommendations on the conduct and progress of our efforts in Afghanistan; and
- d. “review the laws and procedures governing the use of operational and national security exceptions for the withholding of information from Parliament, the Courts and the Canadian people with those responsible for administering those laws and procedures, to ensure that Canadians are being provided with ample information on the conduct and progress of the mission.”

An important implicit task was identified by the Special Committee when it held its first meeting on 15 April 2008.⁽¹⁾ In January 2008, the government agreed with the Manley Panel recommendation that Canadians needed to be provided with “franker and more frequent reporting on events in Afghanistan, offering assessments of Canada’s role” and generally providing “more information and analysis on the diplomatic and reconstruction-development dimensions.”⁽²⁾ Therefore, in addition to conducting a continuous review of the mission, the Special Committee will have regular televised

(1) See the Special Committee’s website at: http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/cmte/CommitteeHome.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=392&JNT=0&SELID=e17_&COM=13694 (accessed June 2008).

(2) Manley et al., *Report of the Independent Panel on Canada’s Future Role in Afghanistan*, January 2008, pp. 36 and 38.

hearings to provide extensive and more substantial briefings to Canadians about the mission in Afghanistan.⁽³⁾

A set of strategic benchmarks, specific to Canada's mission in Afghanistan, is currently being developed under the direction of the new Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan, and are expected to be made public soon. While these benchmarks must take into account those already agreed to between the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners, they should be based on metrics of relevance to Canada, against which government and Canadians at large can judge progress being made in Kandahar Province as well as the country as a whole. In combination with the recommendations of the Manley panel and the motion passed in the House of Commons, this set of benchmarks will allow Canadians to monitor the progress of the mission in Afghanistan.

THE WORK SO FAR

To address these tasks, the Special Committee decided to devote its first few meetings to "information gathering," reinforcing the understanding of members of the larger, political and strategic issues surrounding the mission. Members were also mindful of major studies relating to Afghanistan conducted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Standing Committee on National Defence, and did not want to duplicate their work. Accordingly, this initial report is a review of our work to date rather than an in-depth analysis of issues raised. Future reports of the Special Committee will contain much more substantial analysis, evaluations and recommendations.

The Special Committee decided to begin with high-level witnesses from the international community and the Canadian government, and was fortunate to be able to meet a number of them during their visits to Ottawa.

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Afghanistan

In May 2008, as its first witness the Special Committee heard from Mr. Kai Eide, the newly-appointed Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Mr. Eide presented a clear and frank appraisal of the situation in that country. Security, he said, remains the number one priority concern, but security will not be brought about without adequate governance, effective law enforcement, sustainable development and a thriving economy. He noted that all international partners seemed more willing than ever "to be coordinated" and put aside their parochial agendas in favour of a more broad-based, cohesive effort throughout

(3) See the Government of Canada website, *Protecting Canadians: Rebuilding Afghanistan*, <http://www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/> (accessed June 2008).

Afghanistan. Mr. Eide believes UNAMA needs greater resources – financial and personnel – to be able to do its job in the regions and expand the number of offices.⁽⁴⁾

Ambassador of Afghanistan to Canada

His Excellency Omar Samad, the Ambassador of Afghanistan to Canada, also appeared before the Special Committee. He highlighted the significant degree of progress being made in the reconstruction and development of his country, but also acknowledged that difficult challenges remain, particularly the continuing need for enhanced security; the scourge of the illegal drug trade; the need to fight corruption (which he pointed out was not restricted to the ranks of the Afghan bureaucracy); and the need to eradicate the grinding poverty that continues to exist throughout Afghanistan. Through all this he remained decidedly optimistic that improvement would continue and hoped the international community in general, and Canada in particular, would remain engaged in the long-term.⁽⁵⁾

Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force

Mr. David Mulroney, the Deputy Minister of the Privy Council Office's Afghanistan Task Force, presented the Special Committee with a comprehensive official outline of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, based on the pillars of the Afghanistan Compact (security, governance and development). In addition to a growing Canadian Embassy in Kabul, a diplomatic representative of Canada in Kandahar (RoCK) has been deployed, with additional staff, to coordinate Canada's governance and development programmes alongside the Canadian Forces (CF) military mission in Kandahar Province. He went on to list Canada's many achievements in southern Afghanistan, but, as others have done, he candidly described the work that remained to be done. As all other witnesses had done, Mr. Mulroney underlined there was no short-term solution to the difficulties of Afghanistan.⁽⁶⁾

Graham Fuller

In a single evening, the Special Committee then heard two distinctly different views on the mission: those of Mr. Graham Fuller and Ambassador Arif Lalani. Graham Fuller, an experienced former Central Intelligence Agency official and expert on the Middle East and South Asia who had previously served in Afghanistan, offered a somewhat different prognosis than previous witnesses. While he agreed that the goals of the international community in Afghanistan were worthy and laudable, he argued that these were not being achieved in any significant way, and that the situation was actually worsening. While he made several suggestions such as the need to engage more fully

(4) *Evidence*, Meeting No. 2, 1 May 2008.

(5) *Evidence*, Meeting No. 3, 7 May 2008.

(6) *Evidence*, Meeting No. 4, 14 May 2008.

with regional powers, he believed the fundamental United States engagement strategy in Afghanistan was wrong, and argued that little positive for either side could come from any programme built on such a weak and misguided foundation.⁽⁷⁾

Canadian Ambassador to Afghanistan

On the other hand, Arif Lalani, Canada's Ambassador to Afghanistan reinforced the views offered by earlier witnesses. In one of his more important points, he answered a question about the House of Commons motion on Afghanistan by saying that while goals such as long-term development and economic prosperity will take decades, in light of the motion Canada should focus on making sure, as best it can, that Afghans will have self-sustaining security and other institutions by 2011, as a base upon which to build.⁽⁸⁾

Commander, Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command

Finally, in early June the Committee heard from the Commander of Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command, Lieutenant-General Michel Gauthier, who is responsible for the military mission in Afghanistan. Beyond signs of "qualified progress" in terms of security in Kandahar, General Gauthier told members that the "greatest success story" of the Canadian Forces over the past two years has been the advances they have made with the Afghan National Army, and, to a lesser extent with the Afghan National Police. He added that "The government's decision to extend the mission until 2011 has us all seized with the need to do everything we can at the strategic, operational and tactical levels to set the conditions for our 'whole of government' efforts to succeed. The increasing Canadian civilian presence in theatre, numerous impending capability enhancements for our forces to improve security and force protection, and the declared plan to augment our forces in Kandahar Province by allies, together will help shape the mission as we move forward." General Gauthier also mentioned that, in the future, military personnel in the Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) should be replaced by civilian personnel when conditions allowed it.⁽⁹⁾

(7) *Evidence*, Meeting No. 5, 28 May 2008.

(8) *Ibid.*

(9) *Evidence*, Meeting No. 6, 4 June 2008.

THE NEXT STEPS

The Special Committee has decided to make two important international trips during the summer and fall, before travelling to Afghanistan. First, members decided to visit the United States. In Washington, they will discuss cooperative security, governance and development initiatives undertaken by Canada and the US in southern Afghanistan, as well as broader questions concerning the future of US policy in Afghanistan following elections in November. The United Nations remains central to international efforts in Afghanistan, and the Committee will then visit United Nations Headquarters in New York, to gain first hand knowledge of the international community's political and development assistance plans for that country.

The Special Committee's second trip will be to Europe. In Brussels, discussions in NATO headquarters, with ambassadors of allied partner nations and senior NATO military commanders will review the full breadth of NATO activity in southern Afghanistan. The Committee will then travel to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to meet with government and military leaders of Canada's other two major partners located in the Regional Command South of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).⁽¹⁰⁾

Once these background visits are completed, the Special Committee will be in a position to profitably visit Afghanistan during the fall of 2008 or early 2009, to undertake a deliberate review of Canada's mission there.

To support future deliberations, the Special Committee will develop a long-term workplan, designed to enable regular and consistent monitoring of the mission in Afghanistan, to solicit a wide range of views on the subject and to allow for a helpful degree of foresight and planning. Beginning in September 2008, upon completion of its initial information gathering phase, the Special Committee intends to embark on a sustained programme of meetings that will feature regular appearances by Ministers, as well as comprehensive briefings by senior government officials and military authorities involved in the planning and conduct of operations in Afghanistan. At the same time, it also intends to hear from outside experts, from both non-government and foreign government organizations with experience on the ground in Afghanistan and the region, as well as experts who have conducted serious study of the political and strategic issues involved. In the course of monitoring the conduct of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, the Committee will also consider thematic issues and benchmarks. In addition, the workplan will include the Committee's plans for the review of laws and procedures governing the use of operational and national security exceptions for the withholding of information.

(10) See the ISAF website at: <http://www.nato.int/isaf/index.html> (accessed June 2008).

As mentioned above, Special Committee hearings will be televised, and there is substantial room for public attendance.⁽¹¹⁾ To ensure Canadians and their parliament are kept informed of their mission in Afghanistan, in addition to holding televised public meetings, the Special Committee will frequently and regularly publish concise reports containing relevant reviews and offering constructive recommendations for achieving the goals of the mission.

(11) To see meeting times and locations, go to the Special Committee website at: http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/cmte/CommitteeHome.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=392&JNT=0&SELID=e17_&COM=13694 (accessed June 2008).

APPENDIX LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
United Nations Kai Eide, Special Representative for Afghanistan	2008/05/01	2
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Canada Omar Samad, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Canada	2008/05/07	3
Privy Council Office David Mulroney, Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force	2008/05/14	4
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Arif Lalani, Ambassador of Canada to Afghanistan	2008/05/28	5
Simon Fraser University Graham E. Fuller, Professor		5
Department of National Defence Michel Gauthier, Commander , Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command	2008/06/04	6
Privy Council Office David Mulroney, Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force	2008/06/11	7

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings ([Meetings Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Pierre Lemieux, MP
Chair