

Canada's Honourable Role as a Peacekeeping Nation

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Note: the views represented herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada or the Department of National Defence. Dr. Dorn used his contractually-guaranteed freedom of expression as an academic in matters pertaining to his area of expertise, to voice his own opinions before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in 2007. This is an updated transcript of what he said.

Thank you for the honour of appearing before this Committee. I will offer a constructively critical and comparative perspective of Canada's current engagements in Kandahar, Kabul and various UN missions around the world. When I teach officers at the Canadian Forces College, I use this approach, believing that our soldiers should view their work from differing and critical perspectives weighing the pros and cons of different strategies. During training, soldiers usually learn how to think the same. During education, they should learn how to think differently. "Diversity in Unity" or "Unity in Diversity" is a key principle of our participatory democracy, indeed of our Parliament, as parliamentarians well know.

My research and experience has focused on UN peacekeeping and peace operations, so I am positioned to compare our actions in Kan-

dahar and Kabul to many peacekeeping missions, some of which I experienced first-hand. Canada has a long, strong and proud tradition of peacekeeping; we have a tradition of war-fighting as well, in the “right wars” until now, in my opinion.

The first consequence of our current deployment in Afghanistan is that Canada is currently at a historic low in its UN peacekeeping contribution. Ironically, this comes at a time when UN peacekeeping is at an historic high. We currently deploy merely 55 soldiers under the UN blue flag at a time when the UN has over 70,000 soldiers in the field. The police forces of Canada contribute 50% more than the Canadian Forces. Our military makes up less than 0.1% of UN forces, a hundred times less than the 10% average for Canada during much of the history of UN peacekeeping.

Canada has often ranked as the number one peacekeeping nation since Pearson proposed the first peacekeeping force 60 years ago, a concept which has thrived and evolved internationally as he hoped it would. As you will see from Graph 1, Canada ranked in the top ten until 1996. Then we began the great slide. One of the largest drops (to one quarter strength) occurred two months after the Conservative government of Stephen Harper took office in February 2006, when we closed out our mission in the Golan Heights. 190 logistics specialists left the UN mission, largely because of the pressures of Kandahar, and we have provided the UN with nothing remotely comparable since.

It is clear that one of the casualties of our large Afghanistan deployment is our contribution to UN peacekeeping. This is not only in the field, but also at UN headquarters, which has to guide over 100,000 military and civilian personnel in the field. There is not a single Canadian officer serving in the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York, which has some 70 officers in its military division. The UN has, since 2000, experienced a surge in demand for its peacekeeping services (see Graph 2), with important missions in 18 war-torn areas, including Haiti, the Congo, Liberia, and Lebanon. But the UN has stopped coming to Canada for contributions, knowing that the answer will be a polite “no” with a finger pointing to Afghanistan.

This is doubly tragic because robust peacekeeping, which the UN has evolved over many decades, points the way, in my opinion, to a long-term solution in Afghanistan. The time honoured and tested principles of peacekeeping have led to the resolution of many seemingly intractable conflicts, including intrastate conflicts in Cambo-

dia, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslavia, and East Timor. Former combatants finally relinquished the simplistic labels of “enemies” and “terrorists” to adopt a peace agreement, the only thing that a lasting peace could be based upon. When peacekeeping has deviated from its principles, as it did in Somalia in 1993, it has resulted in disaster.

The three central principles of peacekeeping are impartiality, consent, and minimum use of force. Let us see how these principles apply to Kandahar today.

1. IMPARTIALITY

Impartiality does not exist in Kandahar. We have a declared enemy, given to us by President Bush when he said in September 2001 that the US would make “no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour them.” At the time many of us recognised this as a recipe for an expanding and endless war. Instead of isolating al Qaeda, the Bush administration widened the war to the country’s regime, giving us the first regime change in the Global War on Terror. The US has not sought and did not receive UN authorization for its war on terror nor the operation designed to carry out this war, “Operation Enduring Freedom” (OEF). Unlike ISAF, OEF has no UN-sanction. Yet Canada entered Kandahar under the banner of OEF and from that moment on, we could not be labelled as impartial or objective or as having the population’s interest foremost in mind. Around the world, we are increasingly identified with the US effort to find and defeat enemies in American national interest. We became one of the conflicting parties and we remain so to this today, even though we are currently serving under NATO.

2. CONSENT

There is no peace agreement. We do not have the consent of the main parties to the conflict for our deployments in Kandahar. Even the consent of the local population is in doubt in many areas. We do have the consent of the Government of Afghanistan, though many inhabitants see President Karzai as a leader hand-picked by the US and legitimized by an election in which they did not vote.

Without winning the hearts and minds of the locals we can never

win either the war or the peace, nor obtain their consent to our presence. Canada has for decades urged parties in vicious conflicts around the world to come to the peace table. But we seemingly cannot practice this advice ourselves.

3. MINIMUM AND DEFENSIVE USE OF FORCE, AS A LAST RESORT

Finally, we are clearly on the offensive in Kandahar. The posture is not one of self-defence or protection of civilians but is rather characterized by “search and destroy” missions and large scale offensives, in which civilians are all too often unfortunate casualties. We seem to be producing as many enemies as we are killing, as angry brothers, sons, clan members, and other displaced people fill the ranks of the fallen.

We are losing our young and courageous too: namely the 111 soldiers and one diplomat dead on the fields of Afghanistan (as of March 2009) (The diplomat – whose job, incidentally, I was offered and declined, coincidentally, the day before he died in an “Iraq”-style suicide attack on his convoy. I chose, instead, to serve UN peacekeeping.)

We have lost as many soldiers in Afghanistan than in all UN peacekeeping operations in over 60 years. This was not because Canada did not take risks in peacekeeping operations. As you can see from Table 1, Canada has the second highest level of fatalities in the history of peacekeeping. But the stance the Canadian Forces chose in Kandahar under Operation Enduring Freedom and then NATO, has meant that to many we appear as aggressors not defenders.

We deviate from the three principles of peacekeeping – impartiality, consent, and minimum use of force – at our peril.

So what is the alternative? There is no use criticising unless a better way is possible.

Robust peacekeeping of the type the UN has practiced so successfully in recent years is the better way. In the Eastern Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia, this approach has given us lessons:

- (1) Serve the local population first and foremost, not only to “win hearts and minds” to our cause but to make sure that their interests become our common cause.
- (2) Narrow the list of spoilers, rather than broadening it.
- (3) Negotiate for peace and always give a way out to those committing vio-

lence, except for the most egregious crimes which should be referred to the International Criminal Court or to a special tribunal.

(4) Do not lump together all who oppose the international presence. In Afghanistan, this means recognition that not all who oppose the Canadian presence are “Taliban terrorists.” There are many former Mujahedin from various clans that the West once supported during the war against the Soviet invaders, who are motivated by defence of their country, not love of the Taliban. They long to live and die like the heroes of their folklore, whether it be heroes from the time of British colonizers or Soviet invaders, and they are willing to sacrifice themselves for their tribe or country.

In contrast to prudent peacekeeping policies, the recent model of the Canadian Forces, originating from US Marine Corps commandant Charles Krulak, is the “ThreeBlock War” concept, in which the first block states: “Canada will engage in a high intensity fight against the armies of failing states,” to use the words of a recent Army poster. The Three-Block War model is unworkable and fatally flawed because we cannot simultaneously fight offensive high-intensity combat and carry out effective humanitarian and reconstruction tasks. (See the article by Stephen Cornish in this book.) This is the case in Kandahar, though in Kabul we had a working peacekeeping-type model.

The UN uses force as a last resort (“combat if necessary, but not necessarily combat” to use a quintessentially Canadian phrase), when all negotiations and warnings have failed. I saw this in the Eastern Congo in November 2006 when the renegade 81 and 83rd Congolese brigades tried to capture the city of Goma. The UN gave a firm order to these forces to halt in Sake and when this warning was not heeded the UN and government forces stopped the advance, using advanced helicopter gunships flown by India. Canada, the US and NATO have not even started talking or negotiating with their opponents in Kandahar or other conflict-ridden parts of Afghanistan.

The UN tries to create a working model for a broad-based central government of national unity ... From this “city on a hill” model, it is much easier to win hearts and minds. People will strive to become part of a working society. And to a great extent NATO succeeded with its Peace Support Operations in Kabul and some of the provinces. But this progress is being jeopardized by the US’ and NATO’s provocative measures in other provinces.

This alternative model, sometimes known as the “ink blots” model, suggests that you spread out only when you can succeed. As

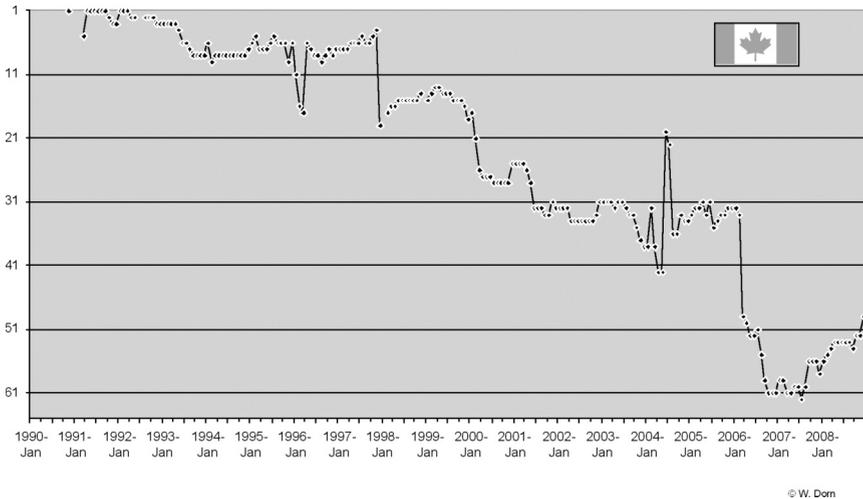
hearts and minds are won, people will flock to the safety and security of protected areas, to places where their voices are heard, their rights respected (especially their right to peace) and their votes permitted. We have to build capacity not dependency, unity not animosity, in Afghanistan. This is what is working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and this seems to me to be the only model that can work in the long-term in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

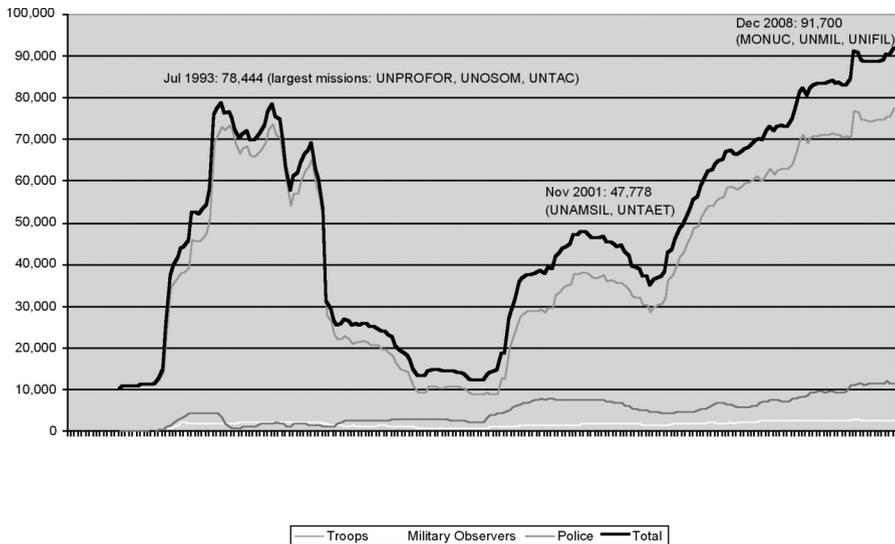
Some may dismiss the UN's sixty years of peacekeeping as outdated and out-moded, but today's UN operations are, in fact, the result of steady evolution, learning from past lessons on the under-use and overuse of force. A balance has finally been achieved in many UN operations. But in the mountains of Afghanistan, we seem to be re-learning these lessons the hard way.

There are three possible approaches: the hawk, dove and owl approaches. The hawk is, in my mind, too aggressive to establish a long-term stability and peace. The dove is too weak to deal with the messy problems in harsh war zones. The owl has the wisdom to know when and where to engage. We should move to an owl approach, knowing when to expand our operations in the "ink blot" model, the ink will spread when the time is ripe.

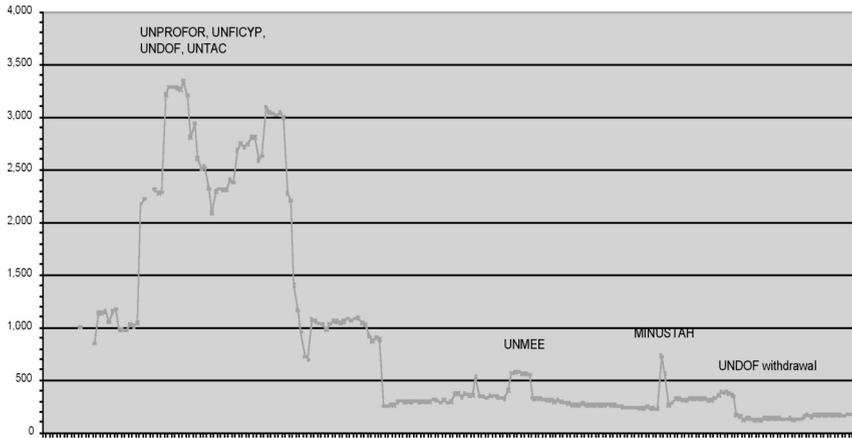
If we want to restore Canadian leadership in the world, a goal that Foreign Minister Peter Mackay enunciated to this Committee, then we should start where we are able and universally recognized to have provided solid leadership in the past: peacekeeping missions. Of course, we should still make substantial contributions to NATO and NORAD but if there is an activity where we stand out in the eyes of the world, it is peacekeeping. We need not compete with South Asian nations for "boots on the ground," but we should be innovative, using our specialized expertise and equipment to make UN peacekeeping more effective and the world safer. We have the technology and skilled personnel that are so needed in UN peacekeeping today. With UN peacekeeping booming, it is the place to be. It is the model to use.



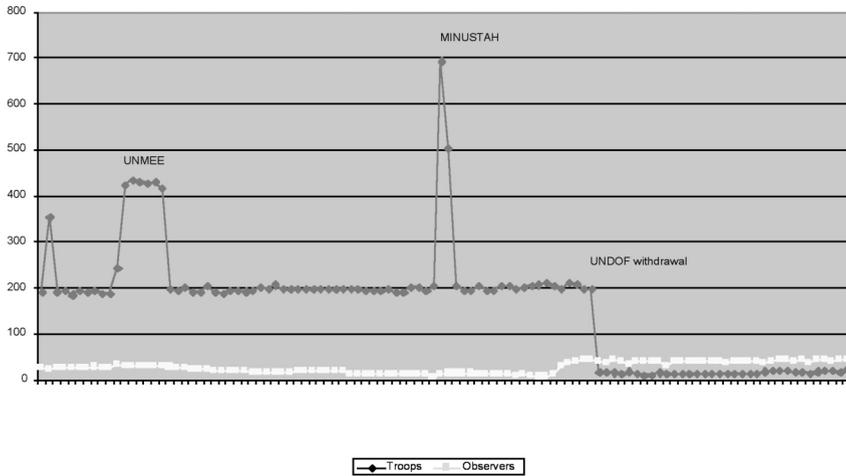
Graph 1: Canada's rank among nations by contribution of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping, 1991 to 2008



Graph 2: UN uniformed peacekeepers (military and police), number deployed 1991–2008



Graph 3: Canadian uniformed personnel (military and police) in UN PKO, 1991–2008



Graph 4: Canadian uniformed personnel (troops, observers, police), 2000–2008

COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST FACILITIES IN UN PEACEKEEPING, 31 DECEMBER 2006 (first 30)

Nationality	Fatalities	
India	120	
Canada	114	
Ghana	109	Data Sources:
France	95	Fatalities: Casualties Database, Situation Centre, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (emails in November 2006 and January 2007). Some of these data are available online at www.un.org/Depts/dpko/fatalities
United Kingdom	95	
Pakistan	94	
Ireland	89	
Bangladesh	80	
Nigeria	80	Personnel contribution numbers: Peace and Security Unit, Department of Public Information. Some of these data are available online:
Zambia	68	Military and police – national contributions: www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors
Sweden	65	Civilian personnel statistics: www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/archive.htm
United States of America	62	
Nepal	57	
Ethiopia	52	
Denmark	48	
Poland	47	
Fiji	45	
Finland	45	
Italy	45	
Austria	42	
Kenya	41	
Norway	41	
Russian Federation	38	
Indonesia	29	
Jordan	28	
Senegal	24	
Belgium	23	
Malaysia	23	
Morocco	23	
Netherlands	23	

