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# THE INDEPENDENT

Halton Hills' award-winning newspaper

40 Pages

**TUESDAY**, February 23, 2010

50¢

Circulation: 22,800

## Local soldiers training in Mojave for Afghan mission

By **CHRISTINA COMMISSO**  
*Metroland Media Group*

On Nov. 24, 2005, while patrolling near the village of Lagman in eastern Afghanistan, the light armoured vehicle Pte. Paul Schavo was traveling in flipped over.

Schavo and four others were seriously injured, and his best friend, Pte. Braun Scott Woodfield, was killed.

For a brief moment, his brother's accident had Robin Schavo of Acton reconsidering whether or not he, too, would serve in the war-torn country.

But that was only for a moment.

"I gave it a second thought, but it didn't change my mind," says 26-year-old Robin Schavo in a camouflage uniform covered in dust.

He is 37 miles northeast of Barstow, California, but he might as well be in Kandahar.

Cpl. Schavo, a member of the Lorne Scots regiment of Peel, Dufferin and Halton, is among 3,800 Canadian soldiers currently training at the National Training Centre in Fort Irwin, Ca.

In what has been dubbed Maple Guardian, the seven-week exercise is essentially a full-scale dress rehearsal for the battle group slated to deploy to Kandahar this April. For the first time in decades, an entire military task force is training on foreign soil.

Under the warm Mojave Desert sun, Schavo explains the motivation behind serving in the forces.

"It was a drunken bar bet," he says with a laugh. "One of my buddies bet me \$50 that I wouldn't join the military. I got \$50 and I'm still in the military."

Schavo hasn't regretted that fateful night once.

"I love every minute of it. There's good training, good people and no matter where we go, we get respect."

His fellow Lorne Scot, Georgetown's Sean Summerfield, put a little more thought into his decision to join the reserves.

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Sean Summerfield (left) and Robin Schavo of Halton's Lorne Scots. The two are participating in a seven-week simulation exercise at the National Training Centre in Fort Irwin, California before deploying to Afghanistan in April.  
 Photo by Christina Commisso

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