

Canada's new role in Afghanistan

On Nov. 16, our government announced a new role for Canada's military in Afghanistan. Next year, our combat mission will end and our training mission will begin.

From 2011 until March 2014, our military will be deployed in a non-combat role to train the Afghan National Army (ANA). In addition, our military engagement in Afghanistan post-2011 will be centred on Kabul instead of Kandahar province. Up to 950 military personnel will be provided to train the ANA and up to 45 civilian police officers will be deployed to train the Afghan National Police (ANP). This training is essential for a self-sufficient Afghanistan, where Afghans themselves provide security and stability.

Canada is in Afghanistan as part of an UN-mandated, NATO-led mission with more than 60 other countries and international organizations, at the request of the democratically-elected Afghan government. Although Afghanistan remains a volatile and challenging environment, we have made real progress. Our key achievements so far include building and repairing 50 schools in Kandahar province, rehabilitating the Dahla Dam and its irrigation system, and contributing to the eradication of polio across Afghanistan.

Canada, along with our international partners, has helped train and mentor about 50,000 Afghan troops. Following the overthrow of the Taliban, the Afghan National Army was officially instituted in 2002. In eight years, the ANA has grown from roughly 17,000 troops to 134,000 and is on track to meeting its expansion goal of 171,600

Michael Chong



troops by October 2011.

Canadian civilian and military police mentors have helped train and guide more than 2,800 police officers since 2008. Through this work, Canada has provided necessary funding to build police stations, pay police salaries and equip officers. As a result, a growing number of Afghans in Kandahar province say they feel safer in their communities. The Afghan National Police (ANP) now numbers almost 116,000, more than the 2010 goal of 109,000 set by the Afghan government and by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.

We should all remember the sacrifice Canadian soldiers and diplomats have made in Afghanistan. In the past decade, over 150 Canadian soldiers have died and over 500 have been wounded in action. In addition, several Canadian diplomats have either been killed or wounded while stationed at our embassy in Afghanistan. We owe it to them, and to our own domestic security, to see the job through.

—Michael Chong is the MP for Wellington-Halton Hills

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