

Acton soldier back from tour in Afghanistan

Major D.R. MacGregor, 46, is back home from his tour of Afghanistan. The Acton resident and owner of Classic Karate on Mill Street just returned from a six-month tour of duty in Afghanistan.

MacGregor, who was stationed in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, was working for ISAF, (International Security Assistance Force.) He worked in close ties to NATO and the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army. His duties included passing information between NATO officials and the Afghan National Police, and vice-versa.

We were like a storehouse of information for everything to do with The National Police," says MacGregor. "So if the higher up, joint task force command, which is a part of NATO, wanted to know something about the police in Afghanistan they would call me."

This was MacGregor's first deployment overseas since he joined the military in 1979. His tour was from April 5, 2007, until September 21, 2007. Even though his job in Afghanistan was not a combat role, the dangers were still very real. If personnel were to leave the military compound in which they worked, they needed to carry all their field gear in-

cluding body armour, a rifle, a pistol, helmet and ballistic glasses.

"Kabul is the suicide bombing capital of the country," says MacGregor. "The insurgents know that if they conduct a bombing in the capital, that's more likely to make the news than if they try the same bombing in another part of the country, so they are quite media savvy."

Unfortunately, says MacGregor, the mainstream media usually only covers the "dramatic" instances that happen during the war. Most of the Canadian Forces in combat are at Kandahar Air Field, which is in the south of the country, far away from head quarters in Kabul.

Donations and aid are sent to the country and include money, food, weapons and ammunition, just to name a few. The Tim Horton's at the Kandahar Air Field has donated over \$23,000 to local charities. "But personally, when it's over 40 degrees, I'm not thinking coffee," laughs MacGregor.

According to the NATO and ISAF website, there have also been some major accomplishments in the country on a social level.

In 2001, 8 per cent of



COMBAT GEAR: MacGregor in full 55 lb combat gear.

Afghans had access to basic healthcare," says the website. "In early 2007, the figure is up to 83 per cent."

Other achievements included schooling and education.

"In 2001, 1.2 million children attended school daily. Today, 7 million do, including 2 million girls."

However, the reality of war is that there is violence and there is death, but coalition forces in Afghanistan are doing a great job at helping to rebuild the country and fight back against the Taliban, MacGregor says.

"The Afghan soldiers, the Afghan police, these guys are really brave and really tough," says MacGregor. "It is actually a common occurrence for a policeman to tackle a suicide bomber, just incredible courage." Ordinary civilians will do whatever they can to help stop the insurgency.

MacGregor shared a story about a civilian whom the soldiers nicknamed Rambo. Rambo witnessed someone who was getting ready to detonate a suicide car bomb. He ran up to the car, reached through the driver's side window, dragged out the driver and held him until police arrived.

This kind of thing happens all the time, and is reported in the local news, but not by international news agencies, says MacGregor. He wants

people to know that with all the death and destruction you hear on the news everyday, there are good things happening overseas.

"There are so many good things that are happening in that place that people here

don't get to learn about unless they know someone who's been over there," says MacGregor. "I had a good time, I felt like we were contributing to that society and that the people there appreciate what we are doing."

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