

NEWS RELEASE

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Laurier to host international conference on the role of PRTs in Afghanistan

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WATERLOO — A distinguished group of international experts will gather at Wilfrid Laurier University May 14-15 to assess the role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan.

The aim of the two-day workshop is to assemble an experienced team of professionals and practitioners with a range of perspectives to undertake an appraisal of the PRT experience. High-level representatives from the United Nations, NATO, non-governmental organizations, Afghanistan, Britain, the United States, Holland, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are expected to attend. A detailed report will be prepared and issued in early June.

To encourage frank discussion, parts of the event will be closed to the public. However, members of the news media are invited to a presentation May 14 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. by Lt.-Col. Simon Hetherington, former commanding officer of the Canadian PRT in Kandahar, followed by a roundtable discussion with other key workshop participants. Both events will be held in the Dean's Boardroom of the Laurier School of Business and Economics.

Journalists are also invited to a public lecture entitled, "Afghanistan and After: Future Foreign Policies," to be held May 14 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Laurier's Maureen Forrester Recital Hall.

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The lecture will feature a panel discussion by eminent scholars on the effect of the Afghanistan mission on foreign policy-making around the world. Event organizers will also facilitate media requests for interviews with individual participants.

PRTs from a number of countries, including Canada, have played a key role in the state-building process in Afghanistan since 2001. This workshop will address the significant variations in the way PRTs are conceived, how they operate, how they interact with the broader tasks of state-building, security, and the struggle against terrorist groups.

Featured speakers at the Laurier workshop will include:

- ∞ Lt.-Col. Simon Hetherington, former commanding officer of the Canadian Forces PRT in Kandahar;
- ∞ Dr. William Maley, author of *Rescuing Afghanistan* and director of the Asia-Pacific School of Diplomacy at the Australian National University;
- ∞ Prof. Ramesh Thakur, Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) in Waterloo, professor at the University of Waterloo;
- ∞ Mr. Diego Ruiz Palmer, Head, Planning Section, Operations Division, International Staff, NATO Headquarters;
- ∞ Mr. Daoud Yaqub, Research Scholar at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University and former member of Afghanistan's National Security Council;
- ∞ Mr. Tom Gregg, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan;
- ∞ Prof. Terry Copp, director of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies.

The two-day conference is the fourth in a series of workshops on Afghanistan organized by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS), the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), and the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS).

Individual reports have been published after each workshop. Select papers from the last workshop will appear in a book to be published later this year by Wilfrid Laurier University Press. The book, *Afghanistan: Transition Under Threat*, will be edited by Prof. Geoffrey Hayes, a Laurier graduate and professor of history at the University of Waterloo, and Mark Sedra of the Centre for International Governance Innovation and the University of Waterloo.