



PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEMAKING

Afghanistan: beyond the fighting

Character Education

- Consider the elements necessary to make independent judgements
- See the universal in the particular
- Appreciate the impact of electronic media in public perception of war

Facts

- E-mail, Facebook, Twitter, Smart Phones, YouTube and search engines such as Google and Yahoo play a large role as information sources
- Canadian Forces were in Afghanistan as part of a UN-mandated, NATO-led mission with more than 60 other countries and organizations
- Canada's Joint Task Force Afghanistan included The Provincial Reconstruction Team made up of an engineering unit, a Civil-Military Cooperation Company, force protection elements and the Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team

Before the Reading

- In small groups discuss one of the following for about five minutes: Afghanistan, WWII, post-Stanley Cup riots in Vancouver or Prince William and Kate's visit to Canada. After five minutes, list all the sources from which you had the information in your discussion. Really try to focus in on where you're getting your information. What are the top three sources for information in your age group?
- Make a list of reality shows that deal with ordinary people. How else can ordinary people become instant celebrities? Is this a good or a bad thing?
- Media guru Marshall McLuhan said that "The medium is the message." What are the messages in how we get the messages?

PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEMAKING MINUTES



Brigadier-General Gregory Young

Brigadier-General Gregory Young

DEPUTY COMMANDING
GENERAL COMBINED
SECURITY TRANSITION
COMMAND, AFGHANISTAN

Brigadier-General Greg Young, was only the second reservist to command the Army's Land Force Central Area in 2005.

He had responsibility for 5,000 regular soldiers, 5,500 reservists and 1,400 civilian employees, a responsibility to which he brought his usual determination and hands-on approach.

In March 2005 Brigadier-General Young visited Fort Albany and Kashechewan so that he could see the fine work of Canada's Rangers first hand. He travelled on snowmobile on James Bay and over frozen rivers and land to see the Rangers and visit community leaders. "It was my first opportunity to see them function in their environment and I was very much impressed."

The Brigadier-General brought the same intense interest to the training of ROTO4, soldiers drawn from the Canadian Mechanized Brigade, while they prepared for "Operation Athena" in Afghanistan. "All

Reading



Canadian Capt. Rob Goldstein greets a child while on patrol through Haji Baba, Panjwahi district, Kandahar, Afghanistan on Wed., Oct. 20, 2010. PHOTO: THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jonathan Montpetit | Toronto Star

Field Notes from CMIC team leader, Captain Rob Goldstein

Rob Goldstein, a federal prosecutor and a Captain in the Reserves, was a Civil Affairs Officer in charge of a five member Civil-Military Cooperation Team in Afghanistan (CMIC). His CMIC included a high school teacher, a corporate security investigator, a helicopter technician and an army signaler. He described his training and deployment in e-mails to his Toronto office.

"The PRT's (Provincial Reconstruction Team) job is to assist the Afghan authorities in providing a stable and secure environment. The training has been interesting, and it is very professional. It is conducted by people who have come off tour and can impart 'lessons learned'. Right now we are into what is called Theatre Mission Specific Training. This is a combination of new training (last week was Afghan culture and history and Pashto language, and it was excellent) or refresher training such as combat first aid. The last couple of days have been counter IED (Improvised Explosive Device) training.

I'll finish this training block at the end of October, and then go off with the rest of the PRT to Gagetown, New Brunswick, where we will meet up with our force protection elements on a one-month exercise and practice all this stuff (soldiers have to practice together over and over and over again together until their reactions to various situations become second nature). Later on, in January and February, the entire Task Force will be on a two-month exercise in California where we'll keep practicing and working with other members of our teams. In between and after these various exercises I'll be taking some courses, such as a two-week tactical combat first aid course, and a one-week operational planning

of us have been impressed with the individual soldier skills and the building of cohesive, professional teams to meet the challenges ahead."

In Afghanistan Brigadier-General Young had the responsibility to reform and rebuild the-62,000-strong-Afghan National Police. His efforts to improve security in Afghanistan and to mentor Afghanistan's Deputy Minister for Security earned him the Legion of Merit from the United States. In 2009 the retired Brigadier-General received the Afghan Medal of Bravery from democratically elected president Hamid Karzai.

"Afghanistan was and is an honourable mission. Canadians are there trying to help provide the security that country needs to recover and rebuild itself. Everyone faces obstacles and it is necessary to use your strength of character to conduct yourself honourably as you confront those obstacles. That is true in Afghanistan and it is true in life."

course. Tomorrow we will receive our desert uniforms and other overseas kit. Contrary to the impression that people might have, the military is putting a lot of resources and effort into training and equipping soldiers who are deploying overseas. We are getting excellent training and first-rate equipment."

In another e-mail from Afghanistan Captain Goldstein wrote:

"So what am I doing on a daily basis? I'm in my office about half the time, and outside the wire patrolling the other half. These are not fighting patrols—I'm a civil affairs officer. I go out there and talk to people, or check on projects that my team is running, or meet workers or contractors that we have hired to do projects. I drink a lot of chai tea and eat Afghan food. We talk about the weather or crops or something like that and then get down to business. We discuss what their needs are in their village, how they feel about the insurgency, whether they have been threatened by the Taliban, and so forth. Then we try to coordinate agencies and projects that will address those needs. It is very challenging. Zhari District is one of the least developed in Afghanistan. Low levels of literacy, high levels of infant mortality, very minimal rule of law and governance and all the ills that go with those things. These problems are easily exploited by the enemy. But, contrary to what people think, we are not trying to fix their society in a six-month rotation. We are practicing basic counter-insurgency tactics here—trying

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Corporal Shangary Satgunanathan

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2ND INTELLIGENCE COMPANY,
TORONTO, AFGHANISTAN
2009

The corporal worked 12 hour shifts in the patient administration division of the NATO hospital at Kandahar's airfield. She was profiled in Jean

Miso's book *We'll Never Forget* and spoke to Patrick Connors about it. The following excerpts are from his article *We'll Never Forget* news4u.net

"As a soldier in the Canadian Forces, I served as a member of the Patient Administration Division at Kandahar Air Field Hospital (Multinational Medical Unit). During every shift, I've witnessed various types of war injuries ranging from minor shrapnel wounds to torn up limbs caused by explosions or hostile encoun-

ters. Some individuals were fortunate enough to be saved by the medical team but some were not.

I met Jean Miso through my former Commanding Officer of the unit 25 Field Ambulance. Her book and everything surrounding it brought me an experience that I would never forget. It was very humbling to meet other veterans who have fought in other wars, to sit next to them and not know what to say because of the overwhelming feeling.

Canada gave my family and myself a second chance at life when we immigrated from a war-torn country like Sri Lanka. Being part of the Canadian military gave me an opportunity to give back to this country and the people for offering a home to the new immigrants. I'm very proud of what I do. I wouldn't trade this experience for the world. I love this country and I would do anything to keep it the way it is—free."

Shangary moved to Canada when she was 15-years-old, became a Canadian citizen at 18-years-of-age and joined the Canadian Army as a medic while she was still a student.

to separate the population from the insurgents and then protect them in order to give their institutions time to develop. We try to give them an incentive to throw their lot in with the Afghan government rather than the Taliban."

Half way through his tour of duty when Captain Goldstein was near Nakhonay, a town about 20 km southwest of Kandahar. Insurgent bomb makers took the lives of six Canadians in this Taliban transit corridor in 2010 Captain Goldstein wrote:

"About six weeks ago my team was transferred from Zhari District to Panjwayi District. We are now attached to the Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group. In Zhari, I lived in a nice air-conditioned trailer. Now I'm in what is called a 'combat outpost' COP—basically a mud hut in a village. If you have a bug, scorpion or snake phobia, do not come to Afghanistan and live in a mud hut. There was a scorpion in my hut the other day. Some of the guys have found vipers in their huts. There is no air conditioning here. Laundry is done with a wash basin and a washboard and we cook our own food. At the big bases private security companies handle security. Here, we do it ourselves (yes, even captains take a turn doing guard duty). In a way, this is good old-fashioned soldier-

ing—we patrol, we guard our camp, and we live pretty basically.

My duties as a civil affairs officer are the same as they were in Zhari, although there is much less office time and a lot more interacting with Afghans. I am on what we call 'presence patrols' about six days a week. Our purpose is to meet people, discuss issues with members of the community, monitor our projects and generally show a presence. The challenges here are vast. The population is very much afraid of the insurgents, and because of our geographical location there is a strong connection with Pakistan and close proximity to insurgent sources of funding, weapons and money. There is no question that the population prefers us to the insurgents. Unlike them, we do not impose a curfew, interfere with local customs, extort food or money, or beat people up who merely carry cell phones. On the contrary, we pay for things we damage. A part of my job here is investigating battle damage and facilitating compensation payments.

I have not encountered any of the famous supposed Afghan xenophobia, although it is true that not everyone loves us and not everyone loves having a foreign army in their country. On the other hand, the hospitality

aspect of “Pashtunwali” appears to be very well entrenched. I have been invited into people’s home to have tea and I’ve enjoyed Afghan meals. Afghans are incredibly family-centric. When people come to our COP I show them pictures of my family and that creates an instant connection.

Anyway, what is all this like physically? Just for fun, I decided to weigh myself carrying all my gear. Right now I weigh about 70 kilos thanks to my delicious COP diet and daily regimen of exercise in 40C heat. With my gear I am a sly 109 kilos. (For those who do hot yoga, don’t tell me it’s great exercise until you’ve done it carrying 39 kilos of gear!) I don’t walk, I waddle.

Frankly, it looks and feels pretty ridiculous carrying around 39 kilos of gear* when it’s over 40 degrees Celsius and sometimes even over 50. And, it’s hard to interact with people when you’re dressed up like an Imperial Storm Trooper and sweating like a hockey player being interviewed during the second intermission. There are no rivers or lakes around here to jump into—only irrigation ditches that double as sewage drains.

Well, that’s it for now”

* fragmentation vest with ballistic plates, Kevlar helmet, C7 rifle, small radio, tactical vest and small backpack with 10 rifle magazines (300 rounds), two fragmentation grenades, medical supplies, yellow smoke bomb (for marking a helicopter medevac landing site), GPS, compass, camera, notebook, pens and pencils, granola bars, night vision goggles, an English-Pashto aide-memoire and six liters of water

After the Reading

- List the information you get in the e-mail reports that you wouldn’t get in any other way
- Discuss in which ways Captain Goldstein’s accounts differ from or are the same as WWII soldier accounts (look for what is universal in these types of accounts)
- If you were to make an independent judgment about Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan, to what sources would you turn? How would personal experiences of soldiers, such as Captain Goldstein, fit into your decision making?

Extensions

- Research the history and culture of Afghanistan. Read *The Sleeping Buddha*, by Afghan-Canadian Hamida Ghafour. How does reporting of the war in Afghanistan negatively impact the perception of the country’s history and culture?
- Look at the article “Canada’s Achievement in Afghanistan to Date (Nov. 16, 2010). To what extent is Canada’s participation in NATO’s Joint Task Force peacemaking, the same as in Europe after WWII? What are the differences?
- At the beginning of WWII, most Americans and many Quebecers considered it a “European War”—something to be worked out over there. When does a war “over there” become a concern for “our home and native land”?

Sources

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