



Kandahar Tour: The Turning Point In Canada's Afghan Mission

By Lee Windsor, David Charters



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"Our Mission was the people of Kandahar and keeping the Taliban from interfering with rebuilding. When we did use force, we had to be discriminate. Killing innocent civilians would be mission failure. I had the A-Team ad could not make it work with lesser men and women." - Lieutenant-Colonel rob Walker, Commanding Officer, 2RCR Battlegroup

"Our job is to create a functional government that earns the respect of its population. The people of Kandahar are not asking for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They want Canada's peace, order, and good government. We're getting there. But it takes time, Thankfully Afghans are more patient than people back home." - Gavin Buchan, Director, Foreign Affairs, Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, 2006-07

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

Task Force 1-07 embarked for Afghanistan in January 2007, at a critical point in the war. Short months before, Canadian and other NATO troops had dealt a stunning blow to the Taliban-drug trafficker alliance at the very gates of Kandahar City during Operation Medusa. The door was now open to expand the development zone into Kandahar's drought- and war-ravaged farmland before the Taliban and drug gangs remustered for the 2007 fighting season. The task ahead required aid delivery, peace-keeping, reconstruction and combat operations all at the same time.

Kandahar Tour is the story of TF 1-07, from its training for war and peace building in Canada to its efforts in the frontlines of the struggle to rebuild a shattered society and restore hope in a land where there was little. Lee Windsor, the lead author, was given extraordinary access to Canada's Joint Task Force Afghanistan. He takes the reader into the command posts and forward operating bases, and the hills and fields where firefights erupt. He witnessed first-hand Canadian Forces working to earn the trust of the Afghan people and reconstruction efforts to restore the flow of water to parched farms, so critical to breaking the hold of the Taliban and drug lords on Afghan farmers. Co-authors David Charters and Brent Wilson ably round out the narrative with historical background and reportage from the home front.

The reader will come to know members of the Task force through eye-witness battle scenes, the carnage of mine and IED blasts, on patrol and on the carpet in council with village elders. The book of necessity records the tragedy of loss, but also the valour and composure under fire exhibited by Canadian soldiers that speak to their professionalism and world-class training.

Waving together the complex threads of Canada's effort in Kandahar was made possible through open access to Department of National Defense and Canadian International Development Agency documents, and remarkably candid interviews with diplomats, aid workers, Mounties and soldiers of all ranks. Kandahar Tour's story is not finished; it will continue to unfold. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of Operation Medusa, the first half of 2007 marked Kandahar's turning point as all aspects of Canada's missions encompassing diplomacy, aid, reconstruction, mentoring, and combat could finally deliver at full capacity.

About the Author

Lee Windsor, PhD, is an historian and Deputy Director of the Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society. In April 2007 he traveled to Afghanistan to directly observe Task Force 1-07 on active service in Kandahar.

David Charters, PhD, is Professor of Military History and Senior Fellow of the Gregg Centre at the University of New Brunswick. He is an authority on insurgency, counter-insurgency and international terrorism.

Brent Wilson, MA, is the Gregg Centre's Executive Editor and Co-Director of the New Brunswick Military Heritage Project. He brings to this book his knowledge of the Canadian Forces' mental health and family support system, and the Atlantic region's military heritage.

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Jodie Long:

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