

# THE UPEI CADRE

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Ray Keating  
Editor in Chief

This week, *The Cadre* is running a story (*found on p. 3*) about increased Canadian involvement in Afghanistan. I am not going to come out in support of this, nor am I going to come out against it. What I am going to do is throw some of the arguments on either side out there for everyone to think about. One thing is for certain though, our soldiers who are deployed in Afghanistan, or anywhere else for that matter, need to know that they have the full support of the Canadians at home. They didn't pick the mission, and it doesn't really matter if we agree with the mission or not, we owe these men and women, who are putting their lives out there in the name of Canada, our utmost respect.

In favor of the deployment, we have to look at the situation in Afghanistan from an historical perspective. I am not talking ancient history, I am thinking back to the 1970's and 80's when we were locked in a cold war with the Soviet Union. When people speak of this cold war, they generally think of the US and the USSR, but it is more realistic to look at it in terms of East vs. West. Canada faced a very real threat during these years, and the Americans made it clear that they were there to protect us from that threat. The Americans are our allies, we don't have to agree with them on every issue, but we have to recognize that if push comes to shove, they will protect us from aggressors, even if we look at it cynically and view their motivation for protecting us as totally self serving.

The Americans have made a lot of mistakes in their foreign policy, and Afghanistan is one of them. During the cold war, it was in the West's interest to avoid Soviet control of Afghanistan. The Americans supported local rebels against

## But I Digress...

the USSR, and as the Eastern Bloc started to crumble, the Soviets pulled out and left Afghanistan a war torn country with a terrible legacy of death and destruction. The real American mistake was that they left Afghanistan too. The rebels, left with a power vacuum and a lot of American arms, took control of the country and formed a theocratic dictatorship that we all know as the Taliban now. This is the result of destabilizing governments in other countries and then leaving. This said, the Americans did what they did there to protect the interest of all Western governments in the fight of the day against Communism.

When Al-Qaeda attacked the United States in 2002, and it was clear that the Taliban had provided aid and assistance, the American government had no choice but to go in and clean up the mess they had left behind years before. We, as allies of the United States, were and are duty bound to do our share to assist the Americans who found themselves in this mess because of a policy of protecting the interests of the West in general against the Soviets in the cold war. This says nothing of our responsibility to NATO and the United Nations, both of whom support the United States mission in Afghanistan.

Of course, that leaves the arguments against the deployment. Oddly enough, it is similar to the argument for. It can be argued that the Americans made the mess in Afghanistan that allowed the Taliban to gain control and in turn support Al-Qaeda against the United States. By this simple logic, we can look at it as "it's your mess, you clean it up". Clearly this has some validity too, especially if you don't buy into the argument that they were working for our

greater good too when they made the mess.

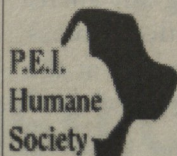
So, given that, why should we send Canadians over there to risk their lives and die trying to clean up an American mess? We haven't got the military resources to be fighting a war, we have a long history of being peacekeepers, not peacemakers, and we are wading hip deep into someone else's fight. So far 11 Canadians have died over there trying to help a group of people who don't really want our help in the first place. This past weekend, some crazy guy in a village decided to attack a Canadian soldier with an axe. We're fighting a war with the kind of people who would resort to anything at all to kill or maim us. Really now, who brings an axe to a gunfight? These people are more than willing to die in their fight... I would suggest that we Canadians don't hold the same goal for our soldiers, and, by all accounts that's just what is going to happen to them. Retired General Lewis MacKenzie and Chief of Defense Staff, General Rick Hillier have both come out in the media and told us to expect casualties on several occasions. If they are saying this, is there any reason we should be surprised when we see more pictures of cold steel caskets draped in the Canadian flag? I think not.

I have only touched the surface of the arguments here, and they run very deeply on either side, but I hope that you'll take the time to look into it, and decide how you feel personally about the situation. Don't be swayed by someone else's argument... form your own opinion and be prepared to back it up. That's the basis of some of our greatest freedoms here in Canada and above all our soldiers stand for the preservation of those very freedoms.

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