



**Case
Study**

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**SIMULATED DIPLOMACY: MOCK AFGHAN VILLAGE
DEMONSTRATION AT
CANADA'S EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

by

Major Tim Dunne, CD, MA (retired)

ABSTRACT

The Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. launched a two-day conference about Canada's operations in Afghanistan to inform U.S. legislators, U.S., allied and partner nation general and flag officers¹, and selected diplomats in the American capital area. Canadian military public affairs officer assigned to the Embassy's Canadian Defence Liaison Staff (CDLS), Lieutenant-Colonel Doug Martin, suggested that the conference be complemented by erecting a "mock Afghan village" on the grounds of the embassy, to simulate Taliban attacks on the village using simulated gunfire and explosions, to be performed five times during the two days of the conference.

The Canadian Embassy is located at 501 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, D.C., in the heart of the U.S. capital, with the Capitol building on one end of the street and the National Mall and White House on the other. Pennsylvania Avenue is said to be the city's busiest street. This event was to take place September 23-24, 2009, twelve days after the eighth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, *al Qaeda* attack on New York's World Trade Centre (WTC) and Arlington, VA's Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. armed services. These attacks killed 2,753 in the WTC and on the airliners that were flown into the WTC's twin towers; 125 perished in the Pentagon; and the 19 terrorists died in the attack. Also, worthy of recognition are the 343 New York City firefighters, twenty-three New York City police officers and thirty-seven officers at the Port Authority. Another 184 people were killed when the hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 was directed into the building. Another 40 passengers and crew members of United Airlines Flight 93 died near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, when they attempted to regain control of the plane from hijackers (CNN, 2017).

On September 13, Washington-based Globe and Mail reporter Paul Koring reported that Defence Minister Peter MacKay's office directed that the gunfire and explosions be removed from the simulations.

While ultimately cancelled, the effort to use simulated explosions and gunfire on the embassy grounds raises several issues of concern about how this event was coordinated.

¹ "General officers" are army and air force officers in one of the four general officer ranks, between brigadier-general to general; "flag officers" are naval officers between the ranks of commodore to admiral.

BACKGROUND

The Canadian Defence Liaison Staff (Washington, DC) hosted a two-day conference September 23-24, 2009, on the grounds of the Canadian embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. This was to promote knowledge about Canada's mission in Afghanistan to U.S. legislators, senior military, State and diplomatic personnel, news media and opinion leaders. Subjects covered in the conference included:

Hyper-Realism Combat Training: a panel discussion about the Simulation Training done in Canada and the United States in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan.

Policing in Afghanistan: Panel presentations and discussion with three police officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a Drug Enforcement Officer and an "Army General from Afghanistan".

Curbing Psychological Injury through Pre-deployment Training: A panel of Canadian and American health care workers to discuss realism in pre-deployment training and its preventative (sic) qualities in combating PTSD and Psychological injury.

Rebuilding Afghanistan - the PRT² Story: Behind the scenes panel discussion with two Canadians and two Americans who have recent experience in Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. (Martin, Afghanistan at the Canadian Embassy, 2009). (Martin, Afghanistan Forum draft 14 August, 2009)

An internal draft email, embassy staff member Ms. Sally Wade included an advisory to conference attendees, notes that the event "will include a security exercise and the use of pyrotechnics.³ On September 23 and 24 at 12:00 noon and 2:00 p.m. as well as 7:30 p.m. on September 24, neighbours should not be alarmed by the sound of an explosion-like noise (a small "bang") coming from the Embassy property." (Wade, 2009)

The Canadian Defence Liaison Staff (Washington): The Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, the second highest ranking officer in the Canadian military,

² PRT - Provincial Reconstruction Team

³ Pyrotechnics are small-charge explosive designed to simulate a military explosive weapon for realistic training or a demonstration.

maintains two Canadian Defence Liaison Staff (CDLS) offices at the Canadian Embassies in Washington, D.C. and London, U.K.

The Washington-based senior Canadian Defence Attaché, a Major-General or Rear Admiral who, together with the Chief of the Canadian Delegation to the Inter-American Defence Board, and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) defence attachés from the sea, land and air environments provide military advice and appropriate support and assistance to the Canadian Ambassador to the United States of America. Canada's defence attachés liaise and communicate directly with the U.S. Department of Defense and other military offices to support the unique and critical Canada-U.S. defence partnership. (The Canada-U.S. Defence Relationship, 2015).

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

As a response to the *al Qaeda* attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, the U.S. began operations against *al Qaeda* and the Taliban regime of Afghanistan on October 7. Canada then announced Operation Apollo, the Canadian contribution of sea, land and air forces to the American Operation Enduring Freedom.

The first Canadian contribution was Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) HALIFAX, already serving with the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic. HALIFAX detached from this force and proceeded to the Arabian Sea on November 2 to begin counter-terrorism operations under Operation APOLLO. Two additional frigates, a destroyer and a replenishment ship joined HALIFAX, bringing the Canadian Naval Task Group to full strength. The frigate HMCS Vancouver was already in-theatre as part of an American Aircraft Carrier Battle Group.

Later in 2001, the initial cadre of Canadian special forces arrive in Afghanistan, followed the following February by the Canadian Battalion Group, based on the Third Battalion - Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, which joined the 187th Brigade Combat Team of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division. In August 2003, Canada deployed Canadian Army combat forces to the ISAF mission in Kabul as part of Operation ATHENA.

In August 2005, the Canadian expeditionary force operating under Operation ATHENA in Kabul began to reposition to Kandahar Province as Canada assumed leadership of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team. The Canadian contingent included approximately 350 military, police, foreign affairs,

correctional services and development personnel who assist Afghans with the provision of governance, security and development.

Beginning in January 2006, CAF members began conducting combat operations in Kandahar as part of Operation ATHENA. At its height, the Canadian expeditionary force included nearly 3,000 Canadian military members in Kandahar. For more than five years, Canadian Armed Forces members operated as part of a multinational force.

Beginning in February 2006 and continuing until December 2011, Canadian medical personnel assumed command of the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit at Kandahar Airfield. At the same time, Brigadier-General David Fraser assumed command of the Multi-National Brigade (Regional Command South), based in Kandahar as part of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

The first Canadian Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) deployed to Kandahar in August 2006 to train Afghan soldiers and police to mentor their leaders, and coordinate partnered and joint operations with ISAF forces.

The Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan (commonly known as "The Manley Report") was published on January 28, 2008.

Major-General Marc Lessard assumed command of Regional Command (RC) South in Kandahar as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in February 2008, and by June, Canada established six strategic priorities and three signature projects that guided its whole-of-government Afghanistan engagement until 2011.

Beginning in December 2008 and continuing until August 2011, Canada's Joint Task Force Afghanistan Air Wing deployed to Afghanistan to provide airlift, surveillance, reconnaissance capabilities, and air mobility support to coalition troops.

On November 16, 2010, the Government of Canada announced Canada's role in Afghanistan until 2014 would be based on four priorities: education and health; security; regional diplomacy; and humanitarian assistance.

Operation ATTENTION began in May 2011, in which Canada contributed the second-largest contingent to the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan to deliver training and professional development support to Afghan national security forces.

As recommended in the Manley Report, Canada ceased combat operations in Kandahar in July 2011 with the arrival of the Mission Transition Task Force

(MTTF) in Afghanistan to prepare, repair, pack and ship vehicles, equipment and material elsewhere in Afghanistan or back to Canada. Operation ATHENA ended in December, as the MTTF completed its closeout activities in Kandahar. The final rotation of Canadian military members deployed to Afghanistan in June 2013 and the mission closure team returned Canadian-owned material and equipment to Canada.

In March 2014, Canada's military mission in Afghanistan concluded. (Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan – Mission Timeline, 2014)

EVOLUTION OF THE SIMULATED AFGHAN VILLAGE PROJECT

The fundamental objective was to inform American legislative, military, and Department of State leaders and selected members of the diplomatic community in the U.S. national capital that Canada was standing with her American ally and other partner and allied nations in the military campaign against Afghanistan's Taliban administration. Embassy staff decided to have a conference that focused attention on Canada's role in that benighted nation. And, in a chicken-and-egg scenario, Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Martin, the Canadian military public affairs officer assigned to the Canadian Defence Liaison Staff in Washington D.C. pitched the idea of a mock Afghan village be set up on the lawn of the Canadian Embassy, then have it "attacked" by actors simulating Taliban warriors using blank rounds and simulated improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

"I don't think we can be dramatic enough to show what troops go through," Lt.-Col. Doug Martin told The Washington Times reporter Joseph Weber. Martin explained that, for the previous year, he was thinking about how to best show the conditions faced by allied forces. (Weber, 2009) His "thinking" apparently brought him to the concept of a simulated battle scene at the Canadian Embassy in downtown Washington, D.C. on the eighth anniversary of the *al Qaeda* attack on New York's World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, the headquarters for the American Department of Defense.

The American Prospect, a U.S. publication with a supporting blogsite, promotes a "liberal intelligence" perspective that endeavours "to advance liberal and progressive goals through reporting, analysis, and debate about today's realities and tomorrow's possibilities." Its writer, Tim Fernholz, opined that the "mock village" project, "was a public-relations stunt worthy of P.T. Barnum, perfect for getting the attention of a (sic) uninterested American audience: Tuck an Afghan village, complete with authentic Afghans, into the heart of Washington, D.C., right between the White House and Capitol Hill. Then blow it the hell up.

"Alas, sober-minded authorities managed to shut down this worthwhile Canadian initiative a few days before it occurred, thinking the melodramatics might frighten citizens still trained by the Bush administration to panic at the slightest whiff of terrorism. The staff of the Canadian Embassy, where the staged attack was set to take place, elected to soldier on with a decidedly less-flashy forum designed to remind Americans that Canadians are still fighting alongside - and, for a time, were fighting without -- U.S. troops in Afghanistan" (Fernholz, 2009).

The simulation was to consist of a series of five "Hollywood-style demonstrations," scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, September 23-24, 2009, inside the embassy's courtyard. It was to include Afghan-American actors, "shrapnel" and simulated improvised explosive devices (IED), in an effort to enhance the conference's objective to highlight Canada's efforts in the eight-year-old Afghanistan war. (Weber, 2009)

Lt.-Col. Douglas Martin wanted to set up a mock Afghan village in front of the Canadian embassy, to be the site for dramatic simulated IED blasts, armed soldiers, and Afghan actors faking critical wounds. The blasts would first go off in the middle of the day, just in time for lunch. "I came up with it on my own," Martin boasted. "It was all me -- all me." (Smith, 2009)."

"The event was part of a two-day forum . . . at the embassy on Canada's contributions in Afghanistan. "Americans often hear about coalition soldiers dying, but nine times out of ten they don't know it's a Canadian dying," Martin said. "We're so close in our relationship that it's important for them to know what Canadians are doing." (Smith, 2009)

The Mock Village

The imitation Afghan village would comprise three buildings, including a small souk (market area), and was to feature about a dozen actors to simulate Afghan villagers, "halfway between the Capitol and the White House." Martin envisaged several Canadian soldiers and U.S. Marines arriving to "see the village leaders" just as the IED blows up, "critically injuring" at least one Afghan, who will get immediate first aid from a Canadian medic.

The embassy staff did seek and receive the necessary permissions and clearances for this event (Koring, Mock shock-and-awe, 2009).

To create the dramatic combat sequences, which Koring described as "shock and awe of explosions ripping through a mock village," Martin requested international defence contractor Lockheed Martin to construct the "village," provide role players - actors to play defenceless civilians, and to use "sophisticated simulations developed by American companies and used to train U.S. and Canadian troops

before they are sent to Afghanistan . . . to garner attention for the often-overlooked Canadian combat effort”.

Lockheed Martin retained the services of Strategic Operations Inc., a California company that claims to bring the “magic of Hollywood” to hyper-realistic training, to provide pyrotechnics for the IED explosions (Koring, Mock shock-and-awe, 2009).

At Martin’s request, Lockheed Martin agreed to volunteer their efforts without charge, to “transport a virtual village used by Canadian soldiers in training into the courtyard of the Pennsylvania Avenue embassy.” Simulated small arms fire and pyrotechnics, to replicate IEDs, were to be provided by Strategic Operations Inc., of San Diego (Lavell, 2009). According to the official schedule, the improvised explosive devices were intended to “cause havoc in the Village.” The Taliban was going to attack a souk and injure a civilian, who would be cared for by a Canadian medic. “It would have given people an example of what our soldiers face,” Martin said” (Smith, 2009).

According to Strategic Operations Inc.’s website, the company specializes in hyper-realistic tactical training. The introduction to the company’s capabilities describes its impetus:

Building on training support experience from OEF, OIF, and Overseas Contingency Operations... Strategic Operations, Inc. (STOPS) offers innovative solutions for the challenges our war-fighters face in this increasingly unstable world. Future threats to our nation’s security more and more will come from failed states and under-governed areas where instability, chaos, and human misery foster breeding grounds for terrorism and insurgencies. Terrorism will not be so much the cause of our future problems as it will be the result of our failures to understand the human domain. As our military becomes more agile, flexible, and ready for the challenges ahead, so must our understanding of the physical, cultural, and social environments in strategic parts of the globe. Our training must be based on these understandings. STOPS creates Hyper-Realistic™ training environments and simulations based on human terrain analytics, an understanding of human geography, and the social and cultural awareness that can help our military and civilian counterparts shape the human terrain before instability morphs into threats. (Strategic Operations Inc., 2015)

While Martin persuaded his superiors that the simulated village and the attacks were the best vehicle, many bystanders were left unconvinced. Goldsmiths,

University of London's Reader and Director of the Centre for Research Architecture, Dr. Susan Schuppli wrote, "To coincide with a September 2009 forum on Canada's military role in Afghanistan the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC announced plans to stage a series of Taliban-led attacks on a mock Afghan village to be erected in the embassy compound. Twice daily, simulated IED blasts were to detonate spurring Canadian Forces personnel and medics to the scene where they would battle insurgents and attend to civilian casualties. While this proposed PR campaign was unique in terms of its stated function to engender greater respect for the efforts of Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, the building and destruction of ersatz architectural sets for playing out the theatres of war is not." (Schuppli, 2010, p. 1)

The project was beset from the beginning with mixed messages. On one hand, representatives of the Canadian Embassy, National Defence Headquarters and Lt.-Col. Martin said that the sounds of simulated IEDs would be akin to "a very large firecracker" while Martin told Paul Koring a very different version of the sounds of the "attack." Twice during each of the two days of the conference, "simulated IED blasts were to reverberate throughout the embassy courtyard located halfway between the Capitol Building and the White House, an event that would likely send unsuspecting tourists and passers-by fleeing in terror down Pennsylvania Avenue. As Lt.-Col. Doug Martin described it: 'It should provide the full-flavour of hyper-realistic training. Absolutely you are going to hear it out on Pennsylvania Avenue' (Koring, 2009, p. A11; Schuppli, p. 2).

DCIST blog site (Sept. 4, 2009) received the news of the impending mock village and the project's simulated attacks with some incredulity. When they first read the Globe and Mail's Washington D.C.-based journalist, Paul Koring, they thought it was a prank. When they learned that the project was actually planned, Sommer Mathis wrote:

It is difficult to imagine, regardless of however much effort the Canadian Embassy eventually puts into warning the public that this is merely a simulation – and we should note that so far, there's been almost none – that tourists and D.C. residents alike in the area will not be shaken up by this. The notion of bombs going off mere blocks from the Capitol and the National Mall make the recent Air Force One photo op over the New York City skyline debacle sound like a harmless schoolyard prank. (Mathis, 2009)

Addressing the ersatz village, Dr. Susan Schuppli wrote that: "This proto film-set was designed by the same companies (Lockheed Martin and Strategic Operations Inc.) that specialize in creating hyper-realistic combat-training simulations or as one soldier put it 'stress inoculators' for US and Canadian troops prior to their

deployment overseas. "Although focused upon delivering military and law enforcement training scenarios, Strategic Operations Inc. or ST/OPS is, in fact, a division within a larger film and TV production company based in San Diego, California." (Schuppli, 2010, page 2)

Precursor to Washington

The American Management Association's Steven Fink wrote that crisis normally has four phases: prodromal (warning) stage; acute crisis stage; chronic crisis stage; and crisis resolution stage (Fink, p. 20-21). He provides a vivid example of a prodromal warning with the December 2-3, 1984 catastrophe in Bhopal, India. As people slept in the early morning, the local Union Carbide pesticide plant had a leak of 45 tons of poisonous methyl isocyanate (MIC), killing 2,000 and blinding an estimated 200,000. The ultimate death toll was between 15,000 and 20,000, with up to 500,000 suffering respiratory problems, eye irritation or blindness (Fink, 1986; Britannica, 2017). However, Union Carbide recorded 71 pre-Bhopal MIC leaks at its plant in Institute, West Virginia, and a further 107 leaks of the nerve gas, phosgene. The company's own 1982 safety report noted that there were safety concerns within the Bhopal plant that represented "a higher potential for a serious accident or more serious consequences if an accident should occur." (Fink, p. 172-3; New York Times, January 28, 1985).

Among the many responsibilities of public relations, communications and public affairs professionals is to monitor the public, social and news media for any indication of trending themes and issues to determine if they may affect the interests, activities and operations of the employer or client. The impact of the *al Qaeda* attack of September 11, 2001, is an omnipresent theme throughout the United States, at sporting events, political gatherings and media commentary. The impact of that attack on the American psyche is similar to the impact of a young person being brutally assaulted by the schoolyard bully, but on a much larger and profoundly more visceral level. This may account for the changes and even reversals of so many of America's international policies, operations and relations.

Martin could have taken a lesson from the U.S. Air Force experience in New York six months earlier, when an Air Force One lookalike aircraft and two F-16 fighter aircraft flew over New York and New Jersey on 27 April 2009, accompanied by Air Force photographers to take pictures high above New York harbour. But the exercise was conducted with no effective public notification or advisory, causing some to panic, and leading to the evacuation of several buildings in Lower Manhattan and Jersey City, infuriating New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg for failing to alert the mayors office in advance about the flyover.

Despite a White House apology, the mayor criticized the unnecessary secrecy of the flyover, and questioned the Defence Department's poor judgment about doing a photo-op over the site of the World Trade Centre catastrophe.

"People came pouring out of buildings, the American Express Building, all the buildings in the financial district by the water," said Edward Acker, a photographer. "Even the construction guys over by 100 North End Avenue area, they all got out of their buildings. Nobody knew about it." Even in Jersey City, construction workers evacuated from a condominium tower that was under construction at the time. A group of financial workers told the New York Times, "I saw the landing gear and I was out of here," and another person noted that "There were people in my elevator sweating and shaking. There were women crying. It is not an experience to be taken lightly."

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg criticized the secrecy around the flyover. "Why the Defense Department wanted to do a photo-op right around the site of the World Trade Center catastrophe defies imagination. Poor judgment would be a nice way to phrase it, but they did." (Sulzberger and Wald, 2009).

Even prior to this, in February 2002, a Continental Airlines flight carrying American troops returning from Iraq, received permission to fly low over the city, a decision that also rattled nerves (Sulzberger and Wald, 2009).

Susan Schuppli explained the New York prodrome: "Already duped earlier that year by an announced White House media tactic which saw thousands of Americans relive the fear of 9/11 as one of the Boeing 747s used by Barack Obama flew across the Manhattan skyline pursued by two F-16 warplanes. Neglecting to warn New Yorkers that the incident was actually a photo op staged by the White House, emergency services were flooded with calls by panic-stricken residents" (Schuppli, 2010, p. 2).

CANCELLED

On Friday, September 11, 2009, Lt.-Col. Grant Dame, the Senior Military Assistant to the Canadian Minister of National Defence, issued an email to the National Defence Operations Centre and to the Assistant Deputy Minister for Policy, saying, "I need someone to tell our Embassy in Washington that the simulated explosions and any other simulated weapons firing is **not repeat not** authorized during the Forum on Afghanistan on 23-24 Sep" (Dame, 2009) (emphasis in the original). Coincidentally, Lt.-Col. Dame's email directing the cancellation of the simulated weapons demonstration occurred on the eighth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, *al Qaeda* attacks on the U.S.

Canada's National Defence Headquarters cancelled Martin's project of the Afghan village and its simulated attack in the heart of Washington, D.C. following the *Globe and Mail's* reports on the proposed event. Washington residents were reportedly astonished by the embassy's recklessness. To underscore this, The New Republic's Jordan Michael Smith quoted The DCist's Sommer Mathis' obvious relief that the mock Afghan village project was dropped. "The notion of bombs going off mere blocks from the Capitol and the National Mall make the recent Air Force One photo op over the New York City skyline debacle sound like a harmless schoolyard prank," the DCist blog wrote" (Smith, 2009).

In response to direction from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, the embassy communications office developed a set of three media response lines, stating:

"On decision to remove IED component of the Afghanistan Forum:

- We have decided to remove the IED simulation exercise from the event
- It was clear that this aspect of the two-day event would overshadow the core message of the Canadian Whole of Government effort in Afghanistan - security, governance, and development
- The Afghanistan Forum brings together Afghan, US, and Canadian partners to discuss common efforts in the areas of military training and health, rule of law, and provincial reconstruction teams." (Chen, media lines, 2009)

Lt.-Col. Martin failed to perceive the prodromic nature Air Force One flight over New York and Jersey City, and the subsequent cancellation of a similar photo opportunity over the American national capital as a very prominent warning that such activities in populated urban settings were ill-conceived and would be the source of significant public consternation. His objective was to use the occasion of the conference to showcase Canada's military operations in Afghanistan without understanding the three overriding realities: that the United States had many more troops deployed to Afghanistan and a second operation underway in Iraq; that Canada is not the only nation engaged in military operations in that nation; and that Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty obligates Canada to join other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the collective defence of any NATO member nation who is attacked. By attempting to attract American attention to Canada's operations in Afghanistan, it was competing with U.S. national attention to its own operations, and the deployments of its own military personnel and the inherent financial, logistical, and political issues involved in concurrently fighting two wars.

The sustained operational philosophy of the NATO Alliance is: "The principle of collective defence is at the very heart of NATO's founding treaty. It remains a unique and enduring principle that binds its members together, committing them to protect each other and setting a spirit of solidarity within the Alliance." (NATO, 2017) Canada was only one of forty-two partner and allied nations engaged in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, none more deserving of American attention than another. Other nations engaged in Afghanistan may well have taken umbrage at Canada's audacious effort to add additional prominence to its national contribution.

Paul Koring explained the Canadian communication strategy in mounting this effort. "As a staging ground for a series of rogue military strikes, the bombing of the Afghan village at the embassy aimed to highlight the humanitarian and combat role of the Canadian Forces in battling Taliban insurgency in and around Kandahar province. Upon detonation, role-playing Canadian Forces and their medics were to arrive on the scene just in time to try and save a Pashtun civilian ravaged by an improvised explosive device. Martin explained the intention behind recreating the violence of Afghanistan in the following manner: 'If this works the way I want it to, more Americans will know what Canada is doing in Afghanistan. Unfortunately there are still a lot of Americans who don't know how great the Canadian commitment is.'" (Koring, 2009, p. A1 & A11)

These elaborate preparations were part of the two-day conference hosted by the embassy to draw senior American military personnel, members of Congress, and Afghan regional military experts to the Canadian Embassy to be instructed on how Canada is conducting operations in Afghanistan. "Between scheduled IED attacks at noon and 2 p.m. on Sept. 23, the first day of the conference, there will be an Afghan luncheon hosted by Kabul's envoy to Washington, Ambassador Said Jawad." Canadian officials were seemingly unaware of the incongruity of the concomitance of a conference, an Afghan-hosted luncheon and a simulated battle occurring within the confines of the Canadian Embassy. (Schuppli, 2010, pp. 2-3; Koring, 2009, p. A1 & A11)

Such promotional activities are routine elements in NATO exercises in European venues. In fact and in the NATO context, these occasions are coordinated by "Distinguished Visitor Bureaus" (DVB) staffed by military and civilian personnel of participating nations. The DVBs organize elaborate simulations that often include simulated combat, civil unrest and displaced persons and refugees as part of the scenarios for "Distinguished Visitor Days," frequently attended by diplomats and military attachés accredited to the exercise's host nation, news media and senior government, military and civil leaders of the hosting nation. The principal difference between these occasions and the Canadian event in

Washington is that NATO exercises are done on military installations, military airfields or sites far away from population centres.

Schuppli takes issue with the wisdom of the simulation, as Canada's increasing militaristic stance in the post-bi-polar world eroding Canada's reputation as a nation of peacekeepers "and their combat role in Afghanistan a source of public contestation, the idea of 'faking the war' for sympathetic purchase and/or to garner the attention of Washington confirmed that a serious lapse in judgment had occurred yet again on the part of the Department of National Defence." Fifteen days later, news that the village component of the Afghanistan Forum was cancelled appeared in Canadian and U.S. newspapers. (Chen, 2009) There was no further explanation for the sudden cancellation of the conference's main attraction. "The ire and incredulity of the Canadian public had, it would appear, diffused the staging of a pyrotechnical spectacle in the Washington embassy compound" (Schuppli, 2010, p. 3), not to mention the insensitivity of simulating explosions and gunfire in a city still traumatized by the events of 9/11.

"While this incident was unique in terms of its dubious function to engender greater respect for the efforts of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, the building and destruction of ersatz architectural sets for playing out the theatres of war is not" (Schuppli, 2010, p. 3).

"Upon further review," Washington Times reporter Joseph Weber quoted Canadian Embassy Counsellor and spokesperson Jennie Chen, "It was clear this aspect of the two-day forum would not add substantively to the forum's core goal, which is to present panel discussions of the entirety of government efforts in Afghanistan." (Weber, 2009)

Since, and as a consequence of, the 11 September 2001 *al Qaeda* attack on the U.S., there has been an incredible level of apprehension about the continuing fear of terrorism in the U.S., as evidenced by the panic in the wake of the Air Force One overflight of New York. Accordingly, when the embassy's plans to use pyrotechnics to simulate improvised explosive devices and various weapons, the embassy quickly assured the public that the demonstrations were appropriate, safe and no louder than a firecracker. However, Weber pointed out, "The staging, pyrotechnics and other technical aspects were being handled by Lockheed Martin and Southern California-based Strategic Operations Inc., part of *Stu Segall Productions* which promised to bring the 'magic of Hollywood' to the demonstrations. (Weber, 2009). Also contradicting Ms. Chen's comment that the demonstrations would be "no louder than a firecracker," were Lt.-Col. Martin's own description of the anticipated result: "Absolutely you are going to hear it out on Pennsylvania Avenue." (Koring, mock Afghan attack, p. A11).

The Canadian Parliamentary tradition of government and governance does not permit public servants and military personnel to question government decisions or the rationale of decisions of superiors and government members. However, Martin told The New Republic's Jordan Smith that he believes people just overreacted to the proposed simulated explosions, which were merely going to sound like a "very large firecracker. The mock village was just supposed to be a complement to the forum, the real value of the conference is in the panels," he says. "But the whole thing got blown way out of proportion – pun intended." (Smith, 2009)

The difficulties brought about because of the explosions did not discourage Lt.-Col. Martin. He told The New Republican journalist that: "Pretty soon I want to hold a program on IEDs, and bring in actual IEDs. We'll have what I call a petting zoo, where people can see and touch the different IEDs," he explained. "The only way the Taliban can kill our guys is with IEDs and suicide bombs, so it's important for Americans to know that" (Smith, 2009). As if the Americans didn't already know that.

Lt.-Col. Martin was reassigned to Ottawa before he could launch the project to "bring in actual IEDs."

CONCLUSION

Dr. Schuppli added that the Canadian Embassy's aborted simulation at its Washington embassy is a disturbing "reminder that enactment of the legal dynamics of the camp as a suspension of a civil and just society had already been fully operational here. . . . Designed to curry favour with Washington insiders under the auspices that the project had the moral support of the Canadian people who had lost troops in Afghanistan, it tried, in effect, to 'slither' beneath the radar of our collective public consciousness obscuring the fact that such a political masquerade was being perpetrated in our name" (Schuppli, 2010, p. 8). Dr. Schuppli's disagreement with this event is apparent, but her words carry other messages: that future events like this should be done not only with the public knowledge and agreement of the host city, but also with that of the Canadian public, who may not agree that this form of "public relations stunt worthy of P.T. Barnum" (Fernholz, 2009) is an appropriate way of reflecting Canadian engagement in the Afghanistan conflict and of recognizing and honouring Canadian service personnel who were casualties and fatalities of that war.

This mock Afghan village and the simulated small arms fire and pyrotechnic IEDs were merely "Flash and Bang" that would not have contributed to the body of

knowledge or an improved understanding of the issues and challenges about operations in Afghanistan.

The image we have of that benighted country is that it is populated by agrarian villagers, but the literature coming from that nation suggests that it was also populated by very cultured and honourable people, some who were forward-looking and who wanted Afghanistan to keep pace with the 21st century and to introduce education and development. This begs the question: is it even possible to resolve problems in another nation, in another culture, without understanding the people, their culture, their literature and their collective self-image, and that cannot be imposed? It must be introduced collaboratively, sensitively and indigenously -- by their own leaders.

The mock village project was another Canadian operational simulation that merely is show-business masquerading as an opportunity to provide insight.

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Major Tim Dunne is a retired military public affairs officer of the Canadian Armed Forces. He has served for 32 years in the regular (full time) force and five years in the reserve (part time) force. He has served on both Canada's coasts and at National Defence Headquarters. His deployments include the United Nations peacekeeping forces in Egypt, Israel, Croatia, and Bosnia Herzegovina, with NATO peace implementation forces in Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania and with NATO's preventive deployment of Patriot missiles to southern Turkey at the beginning of the Iraq war in 2002. While the Chief of Media Operations at the southern Europe headquarters for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Naples, Italy (2000 to 2004), he conducted public affairs seminars for public sector personnel in the Middle East, northern Africa, and eastern and western Europe, and was the director of communications at NATO press information centres for the Cooperative Key series of air exercises in Romania, Bulgaria and France.

Examples of his project work include the establishment of the Swissair 111 international media centre in 1998, the arrival of 2,400 ethnic Albanian Kosovar refugees to Nova Scotia in 1999, the founding of the DND public affairs instructional center in Ottawa, and establishing a public-sector communications instructional centre in Skopje, Macedonia.

His awards include The National Award of Excellence from the Canadian Public Relations Society (1988), citation from the Privy Council of Canada (1991), the International Association of Business Communicators Silver Leaf and Gold Quill awards (1998), and the Bulgarian Order of Loyal Service (2001).

He was appointed the Military Affairs Advisor for the Province of Nova Scotia in 2007, a first in Canada and retired from the Nova Scotia Public Service in 2009. Currently, he is a part time professor of communication studies at Mount Saint Vincent University, he writes a regular op-ed column for the Chronicle Herald, and he is the Atlantic correspondent for the FrontLine family of publications.

This work is the sole opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Canadian Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia. The author may be contacted by email at: RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

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