

CANADA EXPANDS EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN

A new initiative enhances Canada's engagement in Afghanistan by assisting Afghan efforts to stabilize the country's southern Kandahar province.

The recent deployment of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to Kandahar significantly supports Canada's objective of promoting stability along with reconstruction and development in Afghanistan.

The PRT—including about 250 Canadian Forces soldiers as well as RCMP officers, a representative from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and diplomats from Foreign Affairs Canada—will assist the Afghan central government in extending its authority and strengthening its credibility and effectiveness in and around Kandahar.

on Canada's "whole-of-government" approach in Afghanistan, begun in 2002 to provide diplomatic, development, defence and other support to the country.

"This initiative is a genuine demonstration by Foreign Affairs Canada, CIDA, the Canadian Forces and the RCMP of an integrated approach in line with our new international policy," said Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew. "This unique approach will assist Afghanistan in its efforts to become a stable, democratic and self-sustaining state, one that never again serves as a haven for terrorists."

The Canadian Forces will further increase their regional presence this February with a brigade headquarters and army task force situated in Kandahar under the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom. With these deployments, Canada will be positioned to play a leadership role in Afghanistan, particularly in the south.

Canada's efforts have helped achieve real results, especially in security sector reform. The successful completion in July of the first two phases of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program in Afghanistan saw some 63,000 former combatants lay down their arms. Canada also helped to create momentum and support for a program that secured 97 percent of the heavy weapons in the country.

Such progress is critical to the stabilization of regions outside of Kabul, where medical attention and measures to deal with extreme poverty and a lack of clean drinking water are urgently needed.

"Sustainable development requires security," noted International

Canadian Forces vehicles travel down a highway while on patrol in the Kandahar region as part of the Canadian PRT.

Cooperation Minister Aileen Carroll. "The PRT will work to stabilize the Kandahar region and, in turn, this will help create a positive environment where the security preconditions are met for development efforts to flourish."

Canada has signaled its determination with a pledge of \$616 million for development assistance to Afghanistan from 2001 to 2009. The pledge makes Afghanistan the single-largest recipient of Canadian bilateral assistance, much of which is directed to priorities identified by the Afghan government.

In efforts to assist the Afghan government and stabilize the Kandahar region, the PRT will help to promote central government policies and priorities with local authorities, monitor security and facilitate security sector reform.

Afghanistan is entering a new phase after September's parliamentary and provincial elections, which marked the end of the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan, a framework for democratic transition outlining a number of benchmarks and a timeline. Canada played a key role in those elections by contributing more than \$13 million. Canadian Forces in Kabul also provided security during the elections, and Canadian monitors, including representatives of Canada's embassy, helped oversee the results of the voting. 🍁

Additional information on Canada's efforts in Afghanistan is available at www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca.



Sgt. Chris Thombs of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry greets children during a patrol through Kandahar.

"This commitment is consistent with our new international and defence policies, which demonstrate Canada's emphasis on bringing stability to fragile states," said National Defence Minister Bill Graham.

Launched in August, the 18-month PRT undertaking in Kandahar builds