

PROFILES IN THE NEW DIPLOMACY

The face of Canada's engagement abroad is changing. Creating a more secure world by responding to crises and disasters requires a more coordinated approach, new tools and resources—and a different kind of diplomat.

If ever there was a way to dispel the myth of the pampered, cloistered, sherry-sipping diplomat abroad, the reality of the Canadians responding to crises and disasters around the world is it. Far from the pinstripes-and-cocktail-party circuit, Canada's foreign service today increasingly deals with complex emergencies in some of the most turbulent places imaginable, organizing relief following devastating natural disasters and intervening

in fragile states that spawn lawlessness, terrorism and humanitarian atrocities.

Such conditions call for a new approach to diplomacy: one that is flexible and agile, and entails working closely across government and in concert with international partners. Those who practise it come not only from the traditional foreign ministry but include experts in stabilization and reconstruction from other departments and agencies, as well as citizens volunteering to observe the nascent manoeuvres of democracy. They face conflict and uncertainty, putting themselves in challenging situations in order to make a difference.

"In an increasingly interconnected world, we ultimately cannot be secure if others are not," says Ross Hynes,

Practical peacekeeping

As a junior diplomat on her first posting abroad to Zimbabwe in the early 1990s, Wendy Gilmour saw up close the effect that long-term international collaboration and links between civilians and the military could have on peacekeeping efforts. With a background in the Canadian reserves and serving concurrently as a political officer to Angola and Mozambique,

Gilmour found herself reporting on peacekeeping operations involving the Canadian Forces in both countries.

In Mozambique, she witnessed a success story, chiefly brought about by efforts to provide coherence between military, development and political elements in the resolution of the conflict, with the parties to the process committed to maintaining a lasting peace agreement. In Angola, a long-standing peacekeeping mission was ill-equipped in terms of both mandate and forces to hold in check a rebel

movement that was fuelled by the proceeds of conflict diamonds and unwilling to accept the results of a legitimate election. It would be another eight years before there would be lasting peace there.

For Gilmour, the events in the two countries proved the need to give peacekeepers robust mandates and long-term resources as well as to ensure civil-military cooperation on the ground. The experiences would also shape her career as a diplomat.

"It certainly whetted my appetite for being part of the international community engaged in implementing peace agreements, rather than just an observer," says Gilmour, 38, a native of the Ottawa area who is now Director of the Peacekeeping and Peace Operations Group and Director of the Sudan Task Force at FAC.

Gilmour's involvement in peacekeeping and peace support operations has led to assignments around the world, from postings in London and Nigeria to deployments in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Hungary and a 13-month secondment as the political advisor to the commander of the NATO force in Kosovo, where she lived in a tent. Today she oversees the Foreign Affairs role in peace operations in a number of places including Kandahar and Darfur.

Her goal, she says, is to make sure "everything we do has practical effect." That means "moving beyond rhetorical declarations and focusing on where the rubber hits the road."

"We're no longer the monitor of the schoolyard...It's not good enough just to stand and watch," Gilmour says. A diplomat's role in the field is to act as "orchestrator and author" of the peacekeeping operation, addressing the root causes of conflict and mediating to effect change, which increasingly leaves the foreign service and other actors in the line of fire.

"Our peacekeepers—civilian, military and police—are putting their lives on the line, because they're actively trying to promote something," she adds. "Everybody's at risk when they're doing this. But I would rather have our professionals out engaged constructively in these environments than wait for the risks to come to Canada." ■



Canadian diplomat Wendy Gilmour (centre) travels in the back of an army truck in Kandahar, Afghanistan.