

perhaps the people we've helped will think twice before letting them. So, it's a force protection issue, as well as a desire to do good.

Q. *Afghanistan is still a very dangerous place. What are you doing to mitigate risks?*

A. We've spent a great deal of time and taxpayers' dollars training our soldiers in how to handle the worst-case scenario: having to fight. We also came up with a long list of equipment that we needed and got it all—some of it extremely expensive, but well worth the investment. Then there's the situational awareness that comes with experience. The majority of the soldiers have a couple of missions under their belts, so they're bringing to Kabul skill sets that they've learned in places like the Balkans. ♣

For a full transcript of this interview please see www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canada-magazine.

To learn more about the participation of the Canadian Forces in ISAF, visit www.forces.gc.ca/site/operations/Athena/index_e.asp, and to see additional images of their work in Afghanistan visit www.combatcamera.forces.gc.ca.

Improved Land Mine Detection System

To deal with the constant threat of landmines, Canadian forces are relying on the Improved Land Mine Detection System. This Canadian-designed converted armoured personnel carrier uses a magnetic field to project an "imaginary vehicle" over the minefield to detonate buried landmines.

CADPAT

The "disruptive pattern combat uniform" that Canadian Forces are wearing in Afghanistan, called CADPAT, incorporates computer-generated colour patterns that provide excellent camouflage under field conditions. The uniforms have also been treated to reduce detection by near-infrared surveillance equipment.



photo: MCpl Brian Walsh, Canadian Forces Combat Camera



photo: Sgt Frank Hudoc, Canadian Forces Combat Camera

Kabul gridlock

Keeping the Peace

Warrant Officer Sean Chase surveys the rubble that was formerly home to the Kabul Transportation Department. The building's roof has collapsed and cascades like a waterfall into the busy traffic circle across from the Kabul Zoo. "Where do you start?" he muses. "There is simply so much that has to be done."

Chase and the other 1,900 soldiers who make up Canada's Task Force Kabul are responsible for maintaining security in the western part of this city of three million. It's an area of 165 square kilometres, slightly larger than Saskatoon, encompassing both urban areas and rural villages.

Maintaining security means patrolling; within their first week on duty, the Canadians racked up an impressive 196 patrols, and they are keeping to that pace. Navigating military vehicles like the 10-ton LAV III armoured personnel carrier through the mayhem of Kabul gridlock can prove a challenge. Corporal Jay Alefi calls the traffic organized chaos. "The first time I saw it, I thought, you don't want to drive here—it's crazy."

Foot patrols also give the troops the vital advantage of better contact with the locals. "Maintaining positive relations with the citizens of Kabul is essential in order to achieve mission success," says Lieutenant Colonel Don Denne, commander of the Canadian battalion group. The troops are careful and conscious of potential dangers, but they work at being friendly as well as firm. What Denne refers to as "our smile and wave campaign" produces waves in return, and crowds of youngsters seem fascinated with the soldiers.

Good relations are further fostered by the Canadians' secondary focus, humanitarian work. Civil-military cooperation teams determine what the troops can do to help. Lack of clean water is a particular problem in Afghanistan, and Canadians have been busy installing well pumps in the communities around their base. In the longer term, new schools and irrigation systems are planned. And there is constant work for the army's explosives experts, especially with the dangerous task of making Kabul safe from the unexploded shells, grenades and mines that litter the countryside after a generation of war.

It is still early days for Task Force Kabul, but the results seem to be encouraging. "For the most part," says Denne, "the people of Kabul seem genuinely glad to have us here."