

In the aftermath of September 11

CANADA'S DIPLOMATS CONTINUE THEIR VITAL WORK

Last December 10, as Head of Canada's Public Service, Mel Cappe presented 50 Commendation Awards to groups of employees from 20 federal departments and agencies who had made a substantial contribution nationally and abroad in response to the tragic events of September 11. Among the recipients from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade were diplomats with the Consular Affairs Bureau and the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Mr. Cappe noted that in a time of national challenge the work of public servants becomes all the more needed, visible and valued. "In small and big ways," he said, "public servants have demonstrated that they are flexible, effective and responsive to the needs of Canadians."

At the centre of the tragedy: New York and Washington

The attacks of September 11 claimed the lives of 2,830 people in the United States, including 24 Canadians. For many DFAIT staff it was the beginning of the gravest crisis they had experienced.

In Ottawa, Serge Paquette and his colleagues in the Department's Operations Centre worked around the clock to respond to worried families and friends, locate missing people, and help Canadians abroad who were unable to return home because of disrupted air transportation. The Operations Centre received 5,500 calls on the first day, and it handled over 30,000 calls within the first three weeks.

The 80 staff members at the Consulate General in New York overcame their initial shock to tackle the huge task of locating the many Canadians who had not been heard from after the attack on the World Trade Centre, and assisting

those in need. The staff managed to do all this without news of their own families and friends. Working day and night under the leadership of Consul General Michael Phillips, they attempted to locate individuals declared missing and helped Canadians stranded in Manhattan.

After just a few weeks, they had responded to 22,000 phone calls. "We were at the centre of the tragedy," says Mr. Phillips. "Each and every employee demonstrated unwavering courage and incredible dedication."

In Washington, D.C., Ambassador Michael Kergin and his staff immediately set about locating Canadians in the area and establishing links between government officials in Ottawa and Washington—particularly the police, security and intelligence services. The Embassy was

the scene of continual comings and goings by government staff and political officials concerned to strengthen security and advance the fight against terrorism.

In the eye of the storm: Islamabad

Thousands of miles away from the sites of the attacks, the impact was felt by Canadian diplomats at the High Commission in Islamabad, Pakistan. Under the leadership of High Commissioner Konrad Sigurdson, they worked



In Ottawa on December 10, 2001, Consul General Michael Phillips (left) of the Canadian Consulate General in New York received the Public Service Commendation Award on behalf of the Consular Affairs Bureau. Gerry Lisk, Counsellor (Administration) (right) received the Award on behalf of the Canadian High Commission in Islamabad. In the middle is Gaëtan Lavertu, Deputy Minister, Foreign Affairs.