



KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

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AT

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“SHOULD CANADA STAY? HUMAN SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN”

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Thank you very much for that kind introduction.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am truly honored to be with you today, and greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak at this distinguished University.

Please allow me to thank members of the Human Rights Working Group and the McGill Center for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism for organizing this week's events—including this address to help highlight and focus attention on the challenges facing Afghanistan, Canada and our other partners, as we strive to build peace and strengthen governance and rule of law in my country.

I wish to extend my deep gratitude to Joydeep Sengupta for your tireless efforts to promote and defend human rights worldwide, as well as in Afghanistan. I remember our many conversations back at Wabash College in 97 and 98 about world religions and cultures, and how the Taliban were committing unspeakable atrocities against the Afghan people, against Afghan girls and women in the name of Islam.

Joydeep and I condemned international inaction towards Taliban's gross violations of human rights in Afghanistan. As a war victim myself, I often lamented how champions of democracy and human rights in the West remained unmoved and silent, as the Taliban systematically victimized an entire nation—the same nation which had lost two millions of our people to defend and maintain the freedom of then "the Free World" during the Cold War.

But when communism suddenly collapsed in part due to the sacrifices of the Afghan people throughout 1980s, the "Free World" packed up and left us alone to deal with the consequences of their anti-Soviet policies. They abandoned Afghanistan and our future in the



hands of the extremist monster—which the West had created, supported, and maintained for a full decade to bleed the Soviets in Afghanistan.

As we know, Osama Bin Laden was one among many unknown Arab extremists who fought in the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets. When the Jihad ended, however, these extremists turned their guns against their former financiers and allies—the “Free World.” The Taliban movement—mostly composed of former Jihadi fighters—later harbored Al Qaeda in Afghanistan from where they freely launched worldwide terrorist attacks.

Ten years have passed since Joydeep and I were pondering the future of Afghanistan after the Taliban. But it is unfortunate that we are back to discussing the ever expanding danger of resurgent Taliban and their deadly terror campaign not only in Afghanistan but increasingly in Pakistan where the Taliban leadership and their terrorist operational infrastructure are based today.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Why should Canada stay in Afghanistan? I think the answer is already in the title of today’s address: Canada should stay in Afghanistan beyond 2009 and even beyond 2011 because of helping provide human security in Afghanistan.

But what do we mean by “human security” and why is it important? When I was getting my graduate degree in Security Studies, we had hard time defining the term, as some faculty members thought it was too broad of a term, and fellow students called it an “oxymoron.” Instead, they focused on protective security as being safe from military threats, which they agreed to have more explanatory rigor than human security.

But I disagreed with them in light of our changing world and my own experiences in Afghanistan. I argued that both types of security reflect freedom from fear and freedom from



want, and that they are inter-linked in the Afghan context, as well as most other complex post-conflict and conflict settings. I stress today that we cannot neglect human security at the cost of protective security and vice versa.

Human security, once former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said, is "far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and healthcare and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential." He went on to say that, "Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict."

Secretary Annan's definition of human security sums up the conditions that prevailed under the Taliban's brutal rule. In the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Taliban were controlling more than 90% of Afghanistan. They effectively ended factional conflicts that destroyed the rest of Afghanistan shortly after the Soviets had been gone. But the Taliban oppressed the Afghan people, and deprived us of any degree of human security. Under their rule, our state institutions completely failed, healthcare was non-existent, women were denied their human rights, our economy broke down, and abject poverty pervaded our society.

Yet the international community completely neglected the unfolding human tragedy in Afghanistan under the Taliban. On the contrary, some policymakers in the West praised the extremists for ending factional violence in Afghanistan and called for an engagement policy towards the Taliban. As the world remained silent on the oppression and suffering of the Afghan people, the Taliban increasingly focused on their ideology of hatred and anti-modernism abroad. The international community was still watching, however, as the Taliban were sheltering and protecting Osama Bin Laden until together they masterminded and carried out the 9/11 terrorist attacks.



I think had the international community committed to ensuring human security in Afghanistan after the fall of the communist regime, years of civil war would not have ensued there, and the extremists would not have found easy sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today's situation is not much different from the immediate post-Cold War Afghanistan or when the country was under the Taliban. Ideologically, our enemy is more lethal and experienced today than before. They are daily terrorizing the Afghan people, destroying our government institutions, burning down our schools, killing our teachers, and turning our naturally resourceful homeland into a poppy field.

So, the choice is ours to make: stay to finish the job we successfully began seven years ago or prematurely leave Afghanistan defenseless against the same terrorists who killed more than 3,000 civilians on 9/11 and endangered international peace and security.

The government and people of Canada made the right choice when they sent their sons and daughters in harm's way to join more than 40 other nations to help build peace in Afghanistan; and they made the right choice when they adjusted their forces' traditional role as peacekeepers to that of peace-builders today to reflect the realities of a changed world and the needs of Afghanistan.

As Prime Minister Harper recently said, "many yearn for return—indeed in some cases to a virtually exclusive focus—on classical international peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is a wonderful concept. A Canadian invention and frequently necessary. But it covers only a limited portion of the security challenges we face in today's international environment."

True, there is increasingly less peace to keep in Afghanistan but much peace to build and maintain in the country. The Canadian forces and civilian aid workers have just done that. Canada's security and development assistance has been an integral part of international peace-



building effort in Afghanistan. Canada's 2,500 forces have made key contributions to the ongoing effort to contain the Taliban cross-border terrorism. In September 2006, for example, Canadian forces led Operation Medusa, a two-week-long offensive that succeeded in driving Taliban militants out of Panjwayi, a town 30 kilometers west of Kandahar City.

At the same time, Canada has increasingly focused on addressing the human security needs of our people. Last year, Canada committed \$200 million in reconstruction funding to help us stand on our own feet. The funding, in addition to Canada's annual allocation of \$100 million for development programs in Afghanistan, will support five of our priority areas: governance and development; counter-narcotics; police reform; mine clearance; and road construction.

We greatly appreciate Canada's balanced approach to peace building, as well as their close working relationship with the people and Governor of Kandahar. We are very happy with the level of Canadian military and civilian coordination of aid efforts with our local institutions and the people of Kandahar. Therefore, we have advocated for Canada's security and development aid effectiveness to serve as a model for other peace-builders.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In spite of our shared achievements, however, when Canadians and citizens of other NATO countries look at the record of failure of military interventions in Afghanistan over the past century-and-a-half, they may be tempted to ask: 'what chance of success does NATO have?' People should realize, however, that comparing the present-day stabilization mission to past military adventures is not appropriate.

Past foreign involvements in Afghanistan—including those of the British and Russian Empires in the 19th century, and, more recently, the Soviet Union in the late 20th century—were motivated by imperial and ideological competition. Those powers neither signed the Afghanistan Compact, nor were they striving to build a stable, democratic and self-reliant society.



Today, more than 70 nations are working together to stabilize Afghanistan and consolidate our new democracy. This truly international endeavor enjoys the overwhelming support of Afghans, who I think constitute an important strategic asset in the fight to contain terrorism.

Thus, it is clear that Canada is in Afghanistan for different reasons altogether. One of the most significant reasons for Canada's involvement is the country's own national security. We cannot deny the real security imperative Canadians will face if Afghanistan's stabilization efforts fail, and the country becomes the domain of narco-terrorists.

In addition, as Chairman of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future in Afghanistan pointed out in their recent report, Canada's efforts in the region are in support of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which calls for "...a collective use of force under international law, to address a threat to international peace and security posed by continuing disorder in Afghanistan." The military mission in Afghanistan is also a NATO assignment, of which Canada is a member nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Together we have achieved many goals towards Afghanistan's reconstruction, and together we face many challenges to consolidate our gains of the past six years. Today, Afghanistan has the most progressive Constitution in our region, which enabled the Afghan people to elect our president and parliament in free and fair elections. When they were given the opportunity, Afghan men and women fully practiced democracy even by defying terrorist threats and attacks to cast their ballot in the presidential and parliamentary elections in October 2004 and September 2005.

Despite these promising developments, three destabilizing factors with local, regional and transnational dimensions contribute to deteriorating security in Afghanistan.

At the local level, our government's lack of capacity and resources impedes our ability to meet popular demands for basic services. After 30 years of war, Afghanistan suffers from weak



state institutions, and the reform of our national army and police force has not received adequate attention and investment from the international community. As I noted earlier, without security, reconstruction proceeds slowly or not at all.

While the international community has pledged long-term support to Afghanistan's reconstruction, regional actors have concluded that this commitment will be short-lived. They judge us not so much based on the pledges of aid we make to Afghanistan but by the results of our actions towards rebuilding and securing Afghanistan. Those results have been mixed, and failed to make the impact the Afghan people continue to expect.

Therefore, transnational drug traffickers and terrorists have taken advantage of Afghanistan's slow pace of reconstruction, effectively hijacking our country's economic re-emergence. The relationship between drug mafias and terrorists is mutually beneficial. The Taliban finance some of their operations through a 10 percent tax collected from opium producers. Narco-terrorists continue to enjoy an enabling environment as global demand for Afghanistan's heroin far outpaces the international community's ability to provide licit agricultural development and alternative livelihoods for poor Afghan farmers.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

To address these root causes of instability in Afghanistan, the international community must rethink their peace-building approach.

First, the international community must help extend the reach of the Afghan government beyond provincial centers by providing our local-level governance and security institutions with capacity and the necessary resources to protect people against criminality and terrorism.

Second, NATO member states participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) must bolster their troop levels by additional forces, while expanding their limited mandate to include effective counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics.



Finally, terrorist sanctuaries outside of our borders must be shut down. We have not chosen our neighbors. My country unfortunately sits in the middle of a predatory neighborhood. The ability of the Taliban insurgency to operate in Afghanistan depends on a sophisticated extremist infrastructure in Pakistan that recruits, indoctrinates and trains terrorists. This infrastructure capitalizes on endemic poverty and illiteracy to recruit young men into traveling to Afghanistan to fight in the name of jihad.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Canadians know from their many peace operations around the world that winning the peace has a higher rate of success in conflict or post-conflict countries where the majority of people support international intervention. In Afghanistan, the people overwhelmingly support the presence of the international community and their forces to help secure and rebuild our country.

To maintain popular support against the Taliban, we need to deliver peace and human security to the Afghan people. We are grateful to the Canadian forces and civilian aid workers for doing just that, and hope that Canada will continue to stay the course until our governance and security institutions stand on their own feet to ensure our people's freedom from fear and freedom from want for the long haul.

Merci beaucoup and thank you very much!