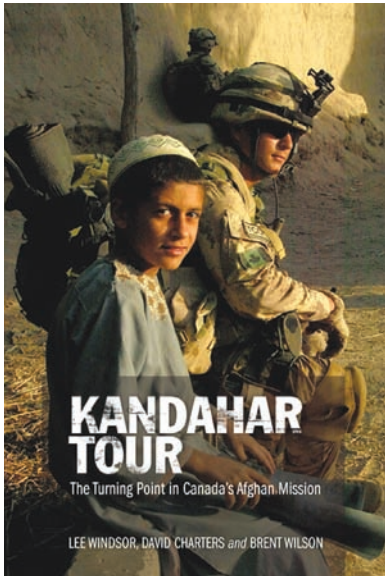


KANDAHAR TOUR: THE TURNING POINT IN CANADA'S AFGHAN MISSION

WINDSOR, Lee, David Charters and Brent Wilson, Mississauga: John Wiley & Sons, 2008, hardcover, 264 pages, \$36.95, ISBN-13: 978-0470157619

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Kandahar Tour provides a comprehensive and contextual account of the efforts and sacrifices of the members of Task Force (TF) 1-07, the third rotation, deployed to Afghanistan from February to August 2007. The effort of the authors, all members of the University of New Brunswick's Gregg Centre for the Study of War, while not without its flaws, is an enjoyable and thought-provoking book. It posits two themes. First, in addition to the unparalleled military success the Canadian Forces enjoyed during Roto 1-07, attempts to reconstruct the country were equally successful. Second, while the media faithfully reported military successes, civil reconstruction efforts were not as widely publicized.

To be sure, TF 1-07 victories over the Taliban cannot be gainsaid. At the Roto's commencement, the battle group was pursuing a predominantly conventional war against Tier 1 (dedicated) and Tier 2 (part-time) Taliban. At its end, the battles were usually fought against unknown, predominantly foreign insurgents fighting in small pockets, the Tier

2 local fighters having left for home and farm. Moreover, the Roto truly took the fight to the enemy moving outside Kandahar City and its outlying districts into rural Kandahar province. The battle group, whose core was the storied 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (the "Royals") from Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, backed by reservists from equally famous militia units from across the Maritimes, through a series of courageous battles and audacious operations pushed the security and development zone further than it had been previously, thereby permitting United Nations and NATO-sponsored restoration initiatives to operate as intended, without molestation.

Kandahar Tour does not restrict itself to its very thorough review of the military aspects of the Roto. The narrative is interwoven with the experiences of the "rear company" left behind at Gagetown, with the support provided by the civilians of nearby Oromocto and Fredericton, of the good work provided by Canadian diplomats, aid-workers, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT), among others. In brief, and this perhaps sets it apart from other books about our efforts in Afghanistan, *Kandahar Tour* considers the entire spectrum of Canadian assistance.

What *Kandahar Tour* emphasizes is that however one defines "success" or "victory," it cannot simply be synonymous with victory in combat and the defeat of the enemy on the field. The war in Afghanistan is an insurgency, which by its very nature is a complex, multifaceted situation necessitating a similar complex, political, military and economic response. The mere attriting of the enemy will not produce positive, long-term results. For every building that is destroyed, another must be build. If the poppy industry is to be eradicated, an alternative crop must be promoted with safe passage to markets guaranteed. If the rule of law is to be promoted in Afghanistan, open and independent courts and safe jails must be created, and non-corruptible Justice participants must be trained.

Recent comments by the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence, accompanied by the publication of *Counter-insurgency Operations* by the Department

of National Defence, have, it is submitted, set the present Afghani conflict into its proper context. Victory in the field must be linked to development in the cities, towns and fields. Success must be characterized not merely as victory in the field, but with peace, security and freedom of the citizens of Afghanistan. If history has demonstrated anything in de-escalating insurgent violence, reconstruction must keep pace with, if not replace, military force as the primary purpose of the military.

Some concern regarding the book's objectivity may be rightfully placed when one considers the authors' research was paid, in part, by a Department of National Defence grant. Its optimistic conclusions should be considered in light of recent events—further military deaths and injuries; increased insurgent activity; and flatlined economic development. To dismiss the book, however, as federal “propaganda” is unreasonably harsh and unwarranted. The subtext of *Kandahar Tour* is that a turning point has been achieved in Canada's Afghan mission. The mission has entered a new phase. Where before the emphasis was on military force, now, either because it is imposed by immediate political/economic realities existent within Afghanistan or future Canadian domestic political imperatives, or a combination of mission. The mission has entered a new phase. Where before the emphasis was on military force, now, either because it is imposed by immediate political/economic realities existent within Afghanistan or future Canadian domestic political imperatives, or a combination of both, military force must accompany civil reconstruction, if not be supplanted by it. That all said, *Kandahar Tour* is a well-researched and comprehensive account of a new, largely unheard dimension of Canada's role in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. It underscores the mission statement of the Gregg Centre, namely that “war [is] a broad and complex phenomenon.”