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PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT CFB WAINWRIGHT

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Graduates of the infantry and leadership training programs, commander and officers of CFB Wainwright, colleagues from the House of Commons, mesdames et messieurs, ladies and gentlemen, first of all thank you very much for your welcome and for the privilege of being here with you today. I'm honoured to be the Receiving Officer at your graduation ceremony here at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright. This day represents an exciting and proud moment for your family, for your friends and especially for you. And as Prime Minister, I can also say that this day represents an exciting and proud moment for Canada. Now, I know that some of you are veterans who are graduating from the leadership program, and others have survived, just survived the rigours of basic infantry training, and you're now ready for active duty in the Canadian Armed Forces. You're about to start or to continue what will be and what has been a challenging and rewarding life in the service of your country.

En répondant à l'appel des Forces canadiennes, vous continuez la tradition qui rend le Canada un pays fort, uni et indépendant, ainsi qu'une véhicule puissante pour faire la promotion de la liberté, la démocratie et les droits de la personne dans le monde entier.

Today you will also begin the writing of your own chapter in the history of the Canadian military, adding to the legacy of generations of Canadian soldiers who have served our country with pride and with honour. In the First World War, young soldiers just like you broke through the seemingly impenetrable British...German lines and took Vimy Ridge. On D-Day in June 1944, the Canadian Army took Juno Beach in the battle of

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Normandy. Later in World War Two, the First Canadian Army went on to lead the Allies in the liberation of Holland from the Nazis. In these and numerous other moments in our history, never once did those Canadians flinch in the face of enemy onslaught, and in so enduring, they showed the stuff of a country that is strong, united, independent and free. Whether it has been liberating Europe from the forces of totalitarianism, rescuing fellow citizens from natural disaster, or keeping the peace and establishing freedom, democracy and human rights around the world, this is the legacy that you will carry forward. Like these generations before you, you have responded to a call, the call of military service, and I believe that military service is the highest calling of citizenship, not because you're ready to die for your country, although we know that every soldier is prepared to do that. No, it is the highest calling of citizenship because you are ready to live for your country, and Canada's Armed Forces personnel remain what they have always been: quite simply, the best and most highly motivated service people in the world.

Récemment, lors j'étais en Afghanistan, j'ai pu constater le travail (inaudible) de nos troupes qui servent le Canada, la communauté internationale et le peuple afghan avec courage et honneur.

Recently I visited Afghanistan, a place where some of you have served and many more of you will likely serve in the near future. I met Canadian Forces personnel in the barracks and the camps of Kandahar province and reviewed efforts to take the countryside out of the hands of terrorists and drug traffickers and to replace minefields with farmers' fields. I toured the base military hospital where a wide range of diagnostics and treatment are provided not just to the military but to Afghan civilians as well. I saw the provincial reconstruction team where public works projects are being

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coordinated, Afghan personnel trained and civil society rebuilt. I opened our new embassy in Kabul where, with the cooperation of our allies and the world community, the strategies are planned that now allow millions of Afghan adults to vote, Afghan children to attend school and Afghan women to live with basic human rights. Each and every victory in that dangerous country occurs only because young men and women like yourselves back up our values by providing security and risking their lives. They deliver humanitarian assistance, demonstrate international leadership and defend our national interests in a dangerous world. That is the type of military all Canadians can be proud of, the military that you are joining.

Now I have read recently that the terrorists say, they've said publicly that they don't think we have the stomach to stay in Afghanistan, and I hear that there are some in this country who believe our commitments are not worth the sacrifice. But I know that you think differently. You are citizens, but you are more. You are soldiers, and as such, you are leaders for all of us. Leaders don't sit in the bleachers. Leaders don't carp from the sidelines. Leaders don't cut and run at the first sign of trouble. Leaders stand up for values, leaders see the mission through and leaders succeed as our Canadian military always has and as the carriers of that legacy, so will you.

Pour terminer, je tiens à féliciter tous ceux et celles qui reçoivent aujourd'hui leur diplôme à Wainwright.

In closing, I want to extend once again my congratulations and my admiration to all of you who are graduating today at CFB Wainwright. As previous graduates will tell you, it is an honour to serve one's country, and I have no doubt like the generations of soldiers who came before you, you will stand up for Canada's interests and Canada's values at

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home and abroad with resolve and courage. I like other Canadians look forward to great things from you in the years to come. Thank you, merci beaucoup, and God bless your efforts. (APPLAUSE)

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