



Press Conference with President Hamid Karzai

Client Recording – Afghanistan – March 14, 2006 – 04h00 – 22 minutes

STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister): No, I don't have it, anyway we'll, we'll ad-lib it.

PRESIDENT HAMID KARZAI (Afghan President): (Speaks in Farsi for about four minutes). Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to Afghanistan. I just spoke in our language, in Farsi, to our people explaining what Canada has done for Afghanistan, what Canada is doing for Afghanistan and I had a question in my language that when you return, Mr. Prime Minister, to Canada, please convey to your people, to the people of Canada the immense gratitude of the Afghan people for what your country, your people have done for us for giving the life of his sons in our country, for contributing in money, for contributing in soldiers, for being among the biggest helpers to Afghanistan and for choosing Afghanistan to be the biggest recipient of Canadian help. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to Afghanistan and I wish all the best and please convey our best gratitude to

the people in Canada. Thank you.

HARPER: Thank you very much Mr. President. Merci monsieur le président. Nous venons d'avoir un excellent dîner chez le président et nous avons encore discuté beaucoup de choses, mais je dois dire que je suis très impressionné par la détermination, l'enthousiasme et l'inspiration que le président Karzai donne pas seulement à sa population, mais aussi à tout le monde, tout le monde entier dans la bataille contre le terrorisme et pour la sécurité internationale. Le Canada, comme le président vient de dire, le Canada est, pour nous, l'Afghanistan est le plus grand pays pour nos aides, aussi pour nos troupes dans des forces internationales. Le Canada a beaucoup contribué, pas seulement à la sécurité et le développement de la sécurité, le police, et de la défense nationale de l'Afghanistan, mais aussi, nous sommes en train de contribuer beaucoup au développement économique, à la formation des millions des enfants afghans. Maintenant surtout des jeunes filles sont en train de recevoir la formation. C'est très important. Comme je dis, hier, nos troupes, nous faisons ces efforts pas seulement pour nos intérêts internationaux mais aussi pour le leadership international et aussi pour les causes humanitaires en Afghanistan. Nous avons discuté beaucoup de défis qui continuent à exister, vont exister pour longtemps. Il y a des grands défis,

le trafic des drogues, le défi de l'économie et de la développement et de la formation et aussi, bien sûr, les menaces qui continuent à exister, du terrorisme qui est contre la sécurité nationale. And I could just repeat that to thank once again President Karzai for his hospitality, we just finished a wonderful meal with the President and a large number of his Senior Ministers and I have to say that his determination, his enthusiasm and his inspiration, President Karzai's inspiration to all of us is exceptional, not just in the leadership he's providing to Afghanistan but indeed the inspiration he is showing to the entire world in terms of security and leadership in what are difficult, what is a difficult situation. We all know. As you know, Canada is the biggest single, Afghanistan is the biggest, single recipient of Canadian aid both of, of humanitarian aid and also of course of military, direct military assistance. Canada has made, we believe, tremendous contributions to, to peace and security in this country, to decommissioning of mines, to cantonment of, of, of heavier weapons. We're involved in developing Afghanistan's police and military capabilities. Besides that we are playing a true, a, a significant role in economic development as well and I think most proudly in education of million of, millions of Afghan children including young girls who are now receiving education they could not have received before. We also discussed, the President and myself

that a number of serious challenges that this country still faces drug trafficking, the real significant challenges of economic development and in, infrastructure development and of course ongoing challenges to, to security both domestic and those from elsewhere. So that was the range of the items we discussed, thank you again for your hospitality, President Karzai, and I said to the President I do hope to see him in Canada...

KARZAI: I'll be there.

HARPER: I think at some point in the future I think that Canadians, if they don't understand now the important contribution they're making will certainly get, always get a strong sense of the importance and the gratitude with which it's received whenever they hear President Karzai speak...

KARZAI: Yes.

HARPER: So with that I will cease my remarks and we'll take a couple of questions.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: Welcome Mr. Prime Minister. Oh I'm sorry. I'll ask my question both in French and English, but you can, of course answer in English. Why – yes, the plane (sound of plane flying overhead.) Why would you say to the Canadian people to explain to them why Canadian

soldiers are risking their lives here and, monsieur le premier ministre, un peu dans le même sens, quel message on enverrait à la communauté internationale si dans neuf mois ou un an, nous sortions du pays de l'Afghanistan? Merci.

HARPER: You can go first.

KARZAI: Sir, the international community arrived in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001 for a very clear reason: To fight terrorism, to eliminate terrorism and to liberate Afghanistan from that terrorism which was occupying Afghanistan and ruling Afghanistan and using Afghanistan against the rest of the world. Examples are before us of New York, the Twin Towers, the Pentagon (inaudible) and all around. So the presence of the international community here is for a cause, the cause of the whole humanity, of the world (coughs), excuse me. Now while fighting that cause, Afghanistan is important because it's from here that the terrorists were attacking the rest of the world. While they were killing the Afghan people they were also planning to hurt the rest of the world so the presence of Canadian troops here, of Canadian help to Afghanistan is fulfilling two very important purposes, one continuing on the path to providing more stability and peace and institutional structure to Afghanistan, enabling Afghanistan to stand on its own feet eventually and

be a contributor to the region and to the world in terms of peace and stability, in terms of fighting terrorism also by doing that, providing stability to Afghanistan, helping Afghanistan stand on its own feet, the Canadian troops, the Canadian sons and daughters are also providing for the long term security of Canada and the countries around it. So it is for the Canadian security, for the security of Canadian people, their life, their economy and the world at large and Afghanistan. So if Afghanistan and Canada are connected in one common objective. The common objective is the fight against terror as it affects us, as it affects you, as it may affect anybody else if we don't fight them and finish them in this part of the world, for which we are grateful. The desire of the Afghan people to fight terrorism is immense, was immense, but that desire had to be helped in order to defeat it. When the international community came that desire joined hands with the machine that the international community provided. The help mobilized all of us to defeat terrorism and bring security to Canada and to Afghanistan.

HARPER: Je peux répéter ce message. Je pense que nous avons vu, la chose la plus importante, le 11 septembre, 2001. C'est que nous vivons dans un monde dangereux. Mais le grand message est que nous pouvons ignorer ces dangers, mais ces dangers nous pas l'intention de nous

ignorer. Nous sommes pas une île, et si nous ne pouvons pas contrôler des situations de sécurité dans des pays comme l'Afghanistan, évidemment, pour notre pays, les menaces augmentent. Et c'est important pour cette région. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous faisons partie de l'invasion en 2001, appuyé par toutes les Nations Unies. Et l'autre chose, nous avons maintenant deux objectifs militaires ici. Le premier c'est de réduire la menace. C'est de combattre la menace des forces terroristes en Afghanistan et le deuxième c'est d'aider les forces afghans de contrôler, de combattre ces forces à l'avenir. Et j'espère, je ne contrôle pas les autres partis du Parlement, comme je viens d'expliquer au président, avec notre système parlementaire, mais je peux dire que si nous, si nous réduisons notre présence à l'avenir, j'espère que c'est parce que nous avons, nous avons réussi à réduire ces menaces et avons eu des succès dans nos objectifs. I'll repeat it, the whole answer in English. Once again we have to remember why we're here. On September 11th, 2001 we saw the terrible events at the World Trade Centre that cost over two dozen Canadian lives. The message from that event is not simply that we live in a dangerous world but that we can ignore the dangers if we want, but the dangers will not ignore us. And unless we control the security situation in countries like Afghanistan, we will see our own security diminished. In

terms of what would it say if we were, if we reduced our presence, our military presence in the future? You know as I said to the President I, we have a Parliamentary system and I don't control the majority and I don't control the other parties but I would hope that if in the future we reduce our military presence, it's because we've achieved two of our objectives. Our two principle military objectives are to fight terrorism, to fight the forces of terror here and to reduce the threat and the second is to aid Afghan forces in fighting it themselves. And so I would hope if we reduce our commitments in the future it's because we're having success in these two objectives.

KARZAI: Wonderful.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: (Inaudible name and affiliation) Mr. Prime Minister what's that hint of your speech with President Musharraf? Will you speak to him about the security in Afghanistan because Pakistan is considered to be one of the countries which plays an important role in Afghanistan security?

HARPER: Thank you for that. I will not be meeting President Musharraf, I will be meeting the Prime Minister Aziz I believe it is, I'll be meeting the Prime Minister of Pakistan a little later today. I have a number of items I want to discuss with the Prime Minister. I'll do that privately. Obviously we

want to discuss Pakistan's role in security situation. Pakistan has been a valued ally of Canada and the rest of the international community in the fight against terror. President Karzai has expressed that, clearly to me his views on, on the situation in Pakistan, I've told the President I've noted those views but as I say we will have a wide range of discussion with the Prime Minister of Pakistan a little later today.

BOB FIFE (CTV Reporter): Prime Minister could you answer this in French and English as well?

HARPER: Well you have to ask it in both then, Bob. (LAUGHTER)

FIFE: Canadian pastures, sir. You, you're full of surprises Prime Minister. You slipped away from us last night and went to see our elite JTF2 soldiers in the desert outside of Kandahar. Could you tell us a little about that experience and why you did it? And you know what? None of us really have ever taken you for a sort of special forces kinda guy.

HARPER: Very quickly I'm, I'm not going to comment on where I was last night. Obviously as my staff informed you we were visiting with Canadian forces in the field, and on this trip I wanted to make sure I got as close to the men and women in uniform as I could to understand, to understand the, the great challenge they've taken on and also their perspectives on

what they're doing, on what they need and its been a very enlightening and rewarding experience. Je peux dire la même chose en français. Je ne peux pas (sic) dans une position de parler de mes activités hier soir, mais c'était mon intention cette visite de rencontrer toutes nos forces, de comprendre leurs activités, leurs perspectives et leurs besoins. C'était une expérience fascinante, de cette perspective. On the latter comment about how you've never depicted me, well I don't, I don't know what I could say about that Bob, there might be, there might be some who have stood in my way on occasion who may have a different perspective than you.

(LAUGHTER)

UNIDENTIFIED: (inaudible)

HARPER: Oui, j'ai passé hier soir avec les troupes canadiens.

UNIDENTIFIED: (Inaudible) prime minister of Pakistan?

KARZAI: (coughs) Well, sir, the reason the international community is in Afghanistan, the reason the whole world is united in the fight against terror is because terrorism can affect anyone, anywhere, anytime. (Sounds of aircraft flying over). It's one of yours or ours?

HARPER: (inaudible) Canadian (inaudible) security. (Sounds of aircraft flying over).

KARZAI: The reason that we are fighting is to secure lives around the world. Parts in Afghanistan are the central pieces in this war against terror and unless there is sincere, intense, systematic cooperation from all sides, the world will not be safe, therefore, it is extremely important that our brothers in Pakistan join us in the most intense manner that's the need of the hour in the fight against terror. Afghanistan's peace, Afghanistan's stability has provided the best and the first defence to our brothers in Pakistan, our sisters in Pakistan. The exports from Pakistan to Afghanistan at the time of the Taliban were \$25 million dollars. Today, in just four years, those exports from Pakistan to us are \$1.2 billion dollars. So this is very clear, its very evident that this war is for the good of all us against terror and that we must expect cooperation in the same spirit.

UNIDENTIFIED: Any more questions.

HARPER: Thank you.

KARZAI: Thank you very much, those were good. Shake? Handshake?

Sure.