



Prime Minister Stephen Harper's addresses the troops

Kandahar, Afghanistan – March 13, 2006 – 7 minutes 17 seconds

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you the Prime Minister of Canada. Sir?

STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Thank you very much, Commander. Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, je suis très heureux de me retrouver parmi vous aujourd'hui. Thank you very much for the welcome, and thank you very much for the hospitality while I've been staying with you. Je suis très fier de pouvoir vous rencontrer, les hommes et les femmes de nos forces armées qui participent à cette mission fondamentale. Je vous remercie, les canadiens et les canadiennes vous remercient, et le peuple afghan vous remercie. I want to begin by telling you how proud I am of the work you're doing. You've put yourselves on

the line to defend our national interests, to protect Canada and the world from terror, and to help the people of Afghanistan rebuild their country. I thank you, I know Canadians thank you, and the people of Afghanistan thank you. Your work is important because it is in our national interest to see Afghanistan become a free, democratic, peaceful and secure country. Before its liberation, under the Taliban, Afghanistan served as an incubator to all kinds of terrorist organizations. This reality hit home with brutal force on 9/11 when two dozen Canadians lost their lives suddenly and senselessly, in the destruction of the World Trade Centre. These were ordinary people, people with families, partners, children, with dreams for the future, people just like all of our citizens. But they died suddenly, they died tragically, and for no reason at the hands of fanatics. Since that time, Al Qaeda has singled out Canada as one of the countries it targets for terror. And beyond the threat of terror, there's the threat of drugs. An unstable Afghanistan represents easy pickings for drug lords, people who would use the country as a safe haven for the production of heroin, which wreaks its own destruction on the streets of our country. Our Canada is a great place, but our Canada is not an island. It's part of a dangerous world, and what happens in places like Afghanistan threatens and affects all of us back home in our own country. Mais votre travail n'est pas

seulement de défendre les intérêts du Canada. Il consiste aussi à renforcer le leadership international du Canada, de prendre position sur des dossiers importants au lieu de simplement critiquer de l'extérieur. On ne peut pas mener de l'extérieur. Je veux que le Canada soit en chef de (incompréhensible). Et on sait que vous voulez être au service d'un pays qui mène, pas d'un pays qui est content de suivre. Your work is about more than just defending Canada's national interests. Your work is also about demonstrating an international leadership role for our country, not harping from the sidelines but taking a stand on the big issues that matter in the world. You can't lead from the bleachers. I want Canada to be a leader, and I know you want to serve your country and you want a country that leads, not a country that just follows. That's what you're doing, serving in a UN-mandated, Canadian-led security operation that is in the very best of the traditions of this country, providing leadership on global issues, stepping up to the plate, and doing good when good is required. Finalement, il faut souligner le travail humanitaire que vous faites. Avec la coopération du gouvernement et du peuple afghan, vous restaurez la sécurité qui permet de rebâtir ce pays et assurer une meilleure vie pour eux et leurs enfants. Nous avons vu les succès humanitaire comme la diminuation de la pauvreté, l'établissement d'élections démocratiques, les

femmes qui jouent un rôle majeur dans le développement, les jeunes de retour à l'école. Ces succès sont visibles et pour vrai. Finally, but no less important, is the great humanitarian work that you're doing, working with the Afghan government and the Afghan people to enhance their security helps them. It allows them to rebuild their country, to make a better life for themselves and for their children. Already, a great deal has been accomplished. Reconstruction is beginning to reduce poverty. Millions of people are now able to vote. Women are enjoying greater rights and economic opportunities than could ever have been imagined under the Taliban. And Afghan children are now in school, studying the same things Canadian children are studying. These are important victories for the people of Afghanistan, and they represent things worth standing up for. Bien entendu, il n'est peut-être pas toujours facile de promouvoir ces valeurs canadiennes fondamentales et il y a peut-être des gens qui ont envie de tous laisser tomber, de prendre leurs jambes à leurs cou. Mais ce n'est pas ma façon de faire, ni la vôtre, Ce n'est pas la façon de faire du Canada. Of course, standing up for these things, standing up for core Canadian values, taking on the dangers you're taking on, these things are not easy. It's never easy, particularly for the men and women who are on the front lines. And there may be some who want to cut and run. But

cutting and running is not your way. It is not my way, and it is not the Canadian way. We don't make a commitment and then run away at the first sign of trouble. We don't and we will not, as long as I'm leading this country. Friends, we've made a great deal of real progress here. Your work is vital to Canada, to the free world, and to the Afghan people. Alors que vous vous préparez à retourner au travail, sâcher que je suis avec vous. Votre gouvernement est avec vous. Et, ce qui compte le plus, c'est que les canadiens et canadiennes sont avec vous. As you get ready to go back to work, know that I am behind you, your government is behind you, and, most importantly, the Canadian people are all behind you. Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. God bless Canada. (APPLAUSE)

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