

Canada must rotate out of combat role in Afghanistan

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The Liberal Party position on our combat role in Afghanistan has been clear and consistent: we will rotate out of our combat role in the Kandahar region in February 2009 and hand over the mission to another North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) country. Canadian Forces will still participate in reconstruction and development efforts, but our combat mission will come to an end.

When Canada went to Afghanistan it was agreed that another NATO ally would takeover for Canadian Forces in Kandahar, but the Prime Minister and his Defence Minister have explicitly said that Canada would be prepared to stay if no other country steps in. This has given other members of NATO a free pass to relinquish their responsibilities. Why would other countries want to upset their constituents by taking over a dangerous combat role when our Prime Minister has said that we will stay?

It is absolutely unconscionable that this government has said we do not care about our troops, particularly when the Liberal Opposition Leader Stéphane Dion and Deputy Leader Michael Ignatieff have just come back from Afghanistan where they met with President Hamid Karzai and our troops. We support our troops and we care about their well-being, which is why we believe we must rotate out for another NATO country to step in next February.