

AFGHANISTAN AND THE REMAKING OF THE ARMY

What ultimately changed everything for the Canadian Forces and, in particular, the Canadian Army was 9/11. The al Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, killed 2976, including 24 Canadians, and began what the George W. Bush administration labelled the war on terror. This led quickly to the American attack on Afghanistan and the ouster of the Taliban regime that had given al Qaeda a sanctuary and, in 2003, the American-led second Iraq War that toppled Saddam Hussein's regime. The Canadian government sent an infantry battalion to Afghanistan in 2002 for a six-month deployment and refused to participate in the Iraq War, instead sending troops back to Afghanistan, where they remained for most of the decade. The Afghan operations, changing from combat to a kind of low-level war and then full-out combat, along with the election of Stephen Harper's Conservative government at the beginning of 2006, focused attention on the Canadian Forces' condition and led to massive budgetary increases, additional personnel, and substantial upgrades of equipment. The war also resulted in many killed, wounded, and injured.

Al Qaeda's brilliantly planned and ruthlessly executed attacks brought Islamist terrorism to the forefront. Within days the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization reacted; NATO's response was the first-ever invocation of Article V of the Treaty that declared an attack on one an attack against all. The United States quickly began operations against the Taliban government of Afghanistan that had sheltered al Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden. The Taliban government was already fighting against disaf-