

# Reorganization blamed for lack of Afghan envoy

Kristen Shane

Canada switches gears this month after spending a decade and about \$11.3 billion on military, diplomatic and development efforts in Afghanistan.

The transition includes pulling out all combat troops from Kandahar and instead installing 950 trainers in Kabul and two other cities to get Afghan security forces ready to stand on their own by 2014. At the same time, Canada is expected to significantly ramp down its international assistance funding to the country.

In this context, the fact the Afghan government hasn't posted an ambassador to Canada for seven months doesn't look good for either country, say critics.

"It is our largest aid program still, and we are also spending defence funds and we will continue to have training, police training and the army training," said Nipa Banerjee, a professor in the University of Ottawa's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and former CIDA representative in Afghanistan. "And I don't know how good it looks that when Afghanistan is one of the pillars of Canada's foreign policy, the position of the ambassador is left unfilled."

However, Afghanistan hasn't posted an ambassador to Canada for seven months for bureaucratic, not political, reasons, says its chargé d'affaires.

## Mission was accomplished

The last Afghan ambassador in Ottawa, Jawed Ludin, left in December, shortly after the Canadian government announced it would commit to the training mission. That had been one of his main priorities during his almost two years as his country's top representative here. A former chief of staff to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Mr. Ludin returned to Afghanistan to become the country's deputy minister of foreign affairs.

Since then, Ershad Ahmadi has been the embassy's chargé d'affaires.



Former Afghan ambassador Jawed Ludin.

Yet besides Canada, there is no ambassador currently based in Afghan embassies in the capitals of two other major partners in the NATO-led force fighting in Afghanistan: London and Paris.

In Paris, the former ambassador to Canada, Omar Samad, has wrapped up his term and a replacement is due soon. In London, Hameed Haami has been the acting chief of mission since February. He said in an email last week that he didn't know when an ambassador will arrive.

Both he and Mr. Ahmadi said the Afghan foreign affairs ministry is undergoing a years-long internal reorganization.

Many serving ambassadors, such as Mr. Ludin, are being recalled to take up positions in the ministry, and new appointments are being made, said Mr. Ahmadi. "There is a process of reorganization, so that takes time."

He said it would be another month or two before Kabul decides who will be appointed as Canada's next ambassador. There is a short list of candidates, but he would not say who is on it.

"This is not a sort of unusual thing. We do take time in deciding on who our ambassador would be in a foreign country, especially in countries with significant partnerships in Afghanistan," he said.

But the Afghan delay could be Canadian-caused, said Christian Leuprecht, an associ-

ate professor of political science who studies defence and security policy at Canada's Royal Military College in Kingston, Ont.

Speaking generally and not in criticism of the former Afghan ambassador, he noted that when ambassadorial posts remain unfilled, that may indicate the foreign government is proposing people the host government finds unacceptable.

"The Harper government is very concerned about optics, and so I would not be surprised if this is a government who looks very carefully at who gets posted here," said Mr. Leuprecht.

Ms. Banerjee, who is currently in Kabul, said she had discussed what she said was a "worrying" lack of ambassadors in key NATO partner countries with an Afghan colleague last week who noted to her that it's symbolic of mismanagement and disorganization in the country.

At the same time, Ms. Banerjee said, there was a lot of hope to serve and improve the country among well-educated diaspora members when she first arrived in Afghanistan in 2003, but aspirations have waned as conflict continues, so there may be a lack of people from which to select well-qualified ambassadors.

She also noted that aside from ongoing security threats, Afghanistan faces a severe financial crisis. The International Monetary Fund and Afghan government are unsettled on how to deal with the aftermath of the collapse of the country's largest private bank, Kabul Bank, which could lead to donors having problems continuing to fund projects.

"[Afghanistan's] transition will definitely be imperiled if they're unable to resolve these problems and therefore perhaps the placement of ambassadors are not their priorities," said Ms. Banerjee.

Canada may also not be as high a priority as it once was for Afghanistan, she said.

"At the time he went there, Canada was still in a combat position, so having a strong person like Jawed Ludin was important," said

Ms. Banerjee. "But since Canada has left the combat position, yes...I agree that Canada is not that important in Afghanistan's mind."

Mr. Ahmadi disagreed. He stressed that the lack of an ambassador is just a "bureaucratic delay" and has nothing to do with the politics of the two countries' co-operation.

In fact, the Afghan envoy to Canada is set to soon open a consulate general office in Vancouver, in addition to one already in Toronto, said Mr. Ahmadi. "So that bilateral partnership is increasing," he said.

Plus, he and the three other Afghan diplomats posted to Ottawa keep in regular contact with Canadian government departments, he said.

Canada's parliamentary secretary to the minister of Foreign Affairs, Deepak Obhrai, echoed Mr. Ahmadi's words of a continually smooth relationship.

"It is the decision of the government of Afghanistan to send their representative here. We, of course, are looking forward to their representative. Nevertheless, we are engaged with the government of Afghanistan through our own representation in Kabul, where we have a full-fledged ambassador. And therefore we view everything as being, at the diplomatic level, just fine," said Mr. Obhrai.

Canada has one of the largest embassies in Kabul.

As Canada enters a new stage in its engagement with Afghanistan, it has the chance to focus more on diplomacy, said NDP Foreign Affairs critic Paul Dewar, and having ambassadors on both sides is a big part of that.

"It looks bad on us," said Mr. Dewar. "I think maybe [Foreign Affairs Minister John] Baird should take a look at this file and should pick up the phone and say, 'You know, we really encourage you to send someone as soon as possible and we're very supportive of you doing that.' Because it's about engagement, that's what diplomacy is."

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# Zinc project starts CIDA down new way of doing aid

Public-private partnerships make appearance in CIDA repertoire

Kate Chappell

Public-private partnerships generally refer to major infrastructure projects like road construction on which government and the private sector collaborate.

However, a new PPP involving CIDA, a non-profit organization and a Canadian mining company highlights an international aid environment being altered by a heightened focus on austerity at home and accountability and transparency in overseas development assistance abroad.

The Harper government on June 27, along with the Micronutrient Initiative and Teck Resources Limited, announced this partnership, which will draw on each organization to deliver zinc to children in Senegal in a bid to treat a highly preventable health condition and save lives in the process.

"The partnership will establish a five-country model for specific projects that will provide zinc supplementation combined with oral rehydration," CIDA Minister Bev Oda told *Embassy* in an email. "Each partner will contribute needed resources and expertise to the [Zinc] Alliance."

The World Health Organization estimates that 450,000 children under the age of five die every year as a result of zinc deficiency.

In addition to zinc supplements and oral rehydration therapy, this initiative will provide therapeutic guidelines for zinc and training and manuals for health workers. It will also educate parents about the occurrence of diarrhea so that they seek treatment right away. The initiative will also provide zinc supple-

ments to children over six months old.

Teck Resources is providing \$5 million over five years and the Micronutrient Initiative will provide on-the-ground expertise in Senegal. (CIDA has previously provided MI with funding, but this partnership involves no new money.)

"This is a project that addresses [accountability] very well," said Venkatesh Mannar, president of MI. "Here is a very clearly defined need with a real problem, and we have a solution in hand that is proven."

The results will be relatively easy to measure as it will mean counting the number of children with diarrhea, cases treated and the response and recovery rate, Mr. Mannar added.

Teck Resources is a British Columbia-based mining company, and while it does not operate in Senegal, it saw an opportunity to expand its focus on corporate social responsibility to an international scope, said CEO Don Lindsay.

"From a basic value of giving back, we chose this initiative because of the connection with zinc, which is a product we produce, and the connection to MDG 4 goals," he said, adding that the partnership aspect was also attractive.

"[With CIDA], we had a vehicle built in within the country that we could support.... As a company, we don't know how to do—These are not simple things. You've got to develop a whole set of plans and tactics, you have to understand why zinc isn't being used widely. There's no possible way that we can do it on our own."

In addition to funding, Teck will contribute to the creation of a governance structure for operations on the ground, Mr. Lindsay said.

## A new way of doing business

Experts say the private sector's involvement in international aid has a long and not overly

successful track record. However, in light of recent austerity measures around the world, donor governments are showing an increased focus on accountability and transparency. These measures are leading to a renewed interest in tapping into corporate participation.

"There is an extraordinary opportunity to leverage resources from the taxpayer and the private sector," said former Liberal member of Parliament Dr. Keith Martin, who is now working in the field of global health. "This project is actually on the cutting edge of where we want to go—depending on how CIDA manages it."

The key to a successful partnership will be establishing disciplined and clear objectives, ensuring that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities, and making data publicly available so it is available for analysis, Dr. Martin said.

"There is definitely a place for the private sector in international development," said Fraser Reilly-King, a policy analyst with the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. "The question is what would be an appropriate way to engage the private sector using what is essentially public funding—and funding that is governed by the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act. I think many donors and civil society organizations are still figuring that out."

This specific configuration of partnering may be new, but the mining industry has been focused on corporate social responsibility for years, said Mining Association of Canada vice-president Paul Stothart.

"Canadian mining companies operating abroad would generally have corporate social responsibility programs and it would not be unusual for companies to team up with an NGO or government agency to deliver aspects of these CSR programs," he said.

Other observers questioned both the type of partnership, as well as the private sector's interest.

"It's a bit strange in the sense that we haven't seen a lot of these PPPs. It is usually applied to infrastructure," said Mining Watch Canada's Jamie Kneen. However, at first glance, this new project appears to be more than the "advertising" that corporate social responsibility generally consists of, he said. "This looks to me like a perfectly positive thing with concrete benefits to children, and it has accountability already built in."

Mark Romoff, CEO of the Canadian Council for Public Private Partnerships, agreed that this is not a traditional PPP, but its potential to achieve something is exceptional.

"This is a very different kind of PPP, with the government, private sector and not-for-profit [sector] working together for social benefits," said Mr. Romoff, who previously worked in Nigeria through Canada's foreign service. "This is a very simple way to address a very life-threatening issue."

The Devonshire Initiative was established in 2007 in a bid to discuss collaboration between the private and public sectors amongst the "extractive" community and how to improve outcomes, according to executive director Alanna Rondi. While Ms. Rondi is not that familiar with this PPP, she said industry, government and non-profits are looking for new ways to work together.

"There is an increasing dialogue around CSR and best practices in sustainable community development," Ms. Rondi said. "There is also an increase in interest among NGOs to partner with extractives. The government can facilitate more of these initiatives by funding such partnerships, as they are not without their risks, and the risk lies mainly on the shoulders of the NGOs."