

Youth Remember Canada's Mission in Afghanistan

Fact Quest Answer Sheet

1. When did the Canadian Armed Forces efforts in Afghanistan take place?

The Canadian Armed Forces mission in Afghanistan started in 2001. Canada's combat role in the country ended in 2011 when the focus shifted to training Afghanistan's army and police force, and the last of our service members left the country in March 2014.

2. Give some information on the following subjects about Afghanistan:

- a. Geographical location and climate

Afghanistan is a rugged country in southwest Asia, located between Pakistan and Iran. This ancient, mountainous land is about the size of Saskatchewan. Afghanistan's climate can be extreme. Summer temperatures of 50°C are common and huge dust storms can sweep across its arid deserts.

- b. Population

Afghanistan has a population of approximately 30 million people.

- c. Brief history/interesting facts

The various ethnic groups and factions that have made the country home over the centuries have given Afghanistan a rich heritage and diversity, but have also helped make peace and stability difficult to achieve.

The civil war that broke out after the former Soviet Union withdrew from its military occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s would see the Taliban regime gain control of the country. This extreme fundamentalist government severely limited civil rights.

3. How many Canadian Armed Forces members served in the Afghanistan theatre of operations?

More than 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members served in the Afghanistan theatre of operations between 2001 and 2014.

4. What were some of the reasons that led to the Canadian Armed Forces deploying there?

On September 11, 2001, four airliners were hijacked in the skies over the eastern United States; two were deliberately crashed into the World Trade Center towers and one into the Pentagon, resulting in the death of nearly 3,000 people. It soon came to light that al-Qaeda was behind the attacks and Afghanistan's Taliban regime had supported this international terrorist group.

The horrific attacks shocked and galvanized the United States and much of the world. Action was quickly taken through the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Canada would soon play a role in the ensuing international efforts to battle terrorism and help bring democracy to Afghanistan.

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5. What were some of the outcomes of Canada's military efforts in Afghanistan?

The Taliban government was soon forced from power and attention turned to stabilizing the country and helping establish a new government in Afghanistan. The Taliban has remained a strong presence in some areas of the country, however, and violence has continued. Canada's combat role in the country ended in 2011 when the focus shifted to training Afghanistan's army and police force and the last of our service members left the country in March 2014. Canada's efforts in the troubled country have been numerous over the years to help rebuild Afghanistan and assist its people through projects like improving access to healthcare, offering humanitarian aid and building schools, roads and dams. Reaching out in an attempt to build trust and win the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan was an important goal.

6. There were many examples of great bravery by Canadians in Afghanistan. What were some of them?

A number of Canadians who served in Afghanistan have earned the Star of Military Valour—our country's second-highest decoration for courage. The first was Sergeant Patrick Tower in August 2006 when he braved enemy fire to lead the extraction of a platoon that had come under heavy attack.

Flight Lieutenant Chris Hasler, a Canadian serving with Britain's Royal Air Force, received the Distinguished Flying Cross for piloting helicopter resupply missions under fire in July 2006. He was the first Canadian to be decorated for bravery in the air in more than 50 years.

7. How many Canadian Armed Forces members lost their lives in Afghanistan?

158 Canadian Armed Forces members died in the cause of peace and freedom in Afghanistan.

8. Based on what you learned in the information sheet and other things you may know about Canada's efforts in Afghanistan, do you think that the difference our country made there was worth the years of service and sacrifice?

Answers will vary...