

From the Afghan Front

(A letter to his friends and family, edited for space)

I apologize for the generic letter, but these days I don't have a lot of time to [say] thanks to all the people who have offered me overwhelming support. Your support is not only appreciated but quite honestly sustains me through some of the worst days of my life. Bar none, this is an experience that I will never forget, and has changed me in so many ways.

I have been ambushed, attacked, bombed, mortared, mined and RPG'd to the point that I honestly cannot wait to get home. Half of our company has been wounded and, of 120 men, the enemy has killed six. Of the wounded, some have endured the loss of limbs, paralysis, and one is learning to read and write again.

The enemy is real – and a brutal enemy he is. Never have I believed more in a cause, and each and every day I believe in it more. Our enemy uses children to fight its battles and as shields, it coerces, threatens, blackmails, steals, sells opium and represses women. It murders elderly men simply because they associate with us, and it corrupts a religion by holding it hostage. It is uneducated and illiterate, but certainly not stupid. It places its mines strategically and wages a war of terror so that the locals live in fear. Most of the Taliban are foreign, and use the local population for their purpose but do not care for their well-being. They force the locals on missions with absolutely no chance of success and accuse them of being bad Muslims when they question it. They



Curious villagers wait outside a Shura (meeting) with elders and a Civilian Military Cooperation (CIMIC) team. Soldiers provide security to avoid disruptions and attacks by the Taliban. Soldiers maintain non-aggressive postures to avoid creating tension with villagers, who will watch for hours. CIMIC teams in Afghanistan are at the forefront of helping to rebuild the country.

PHOTO: SGT DENNIS POWER / JAN 2007

have no hesitation in causing massive civilian casualties if it results in even one coalition dead. As much as it is a sin to kill your fellow man, it would be a bigger sin to let the Taliban have freedom of action in a country that does not want its return.

Contrary to what the media believes, Afghans do support the coalition, and we must support them.

There is no shortage of people willing to die for [the Taliban] cause, but I am thankful that those people choose to fight us here, rather than [in Canada].

As for the development of this country, Canada and reporters in general have it wrong. The West will not rebuild this country; Afghans will – and are doing it each day. The West can facilitate the process, but it is becoming clearer that in [dangerous areas] international agencies are reticent to help. My message to them is to get off their soapbox and take

some risk. Regardless of the situation, progress and development are continuing – particularly in parts of the country where there is no fighting. The media is focused on our area of operations, and

they forget about progress occurring around the country.

The Taliban has massed around us and we are willing to take on that burden. I want you very much to believe in what Canada is doing here in Kandahar.

Canada, at an international level, has stepped up and is taking a leadership role in NATO. We are doing what is right, not what is easy. It is important that we carry the load at least until the end of our mandate, at which time we can let someone else take the lead. You have made this possible, and we should all be very proud to be Canadian right now.

Currently, we are committed to seeing the construction of a road, a simple road, but a road that has cost us seven soldiers including two from my Company, Sgt Darcy Tedford and Pte Blake Williamson. I am so proud to be with soldiers like these and am happy to report that they have represented us all so well. The rest of us will stand here with our Afghan brothers, and this road will get finished.

I have been raised as most other Canadians, with a sense of duty and fair play that is directly related to the relationships I have with my family, my community and my country. Thanks for everything. FL

*Captain Steve G. Brown, Pro Patria
1 RCR (Charles Company)*

« **Corporal Tamar Freeman, a medic assisting at a Village Medical Outreach (VMO) receives thanks from a woman she has just helped. The VMO is part of a larger mission of the Provincial Reconstruction Team based in Kandahar City.**



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