



Kandahar



"When you're wounded and
dying on Afghanistan's plains,
And the women come out
to cut up what remains,
Just roll to your rifle
and blow out your brains,
And go to your God like a soldier."

Rudyard Kipling



A Factual Television Series
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A REALITY SERIES IN THE THEATRE OF WAR

What happens when a young soldier goes to war? It is no longer a video game or a movie, but the reality of functioning every day in a foreign land where you face a number of armed, organized people out there that want to kill you. This is the traditional job of a soldier. Most sign up for duty in Afghanistan to protect the innocent or rebuild a fragile country or to battle a murderous insurgency. For others it's the financial bonuses, benefits and promotions.

Kandahar will be a series of six half hours for CBC television that will track the experiences of Atlantic Canadian soldiers going into a war zone. We will spend time with seven carefully selected, diverse, intelligent young soldiers (approx. five men and two women) in the days before their first six month deployment to Afghanistan. We will see where they come from – places like Springhill, Dartmouth, Glace Bay, Digby or Sunnyside – meet their families and friends, and hear of their expectations, their hopes and their fears. We'll go with them to the local Tim Hortons, the Walmart for supplies or a Spring Garden Road tattoo parlour for a pre-deployment regimental "tat".

Kandahar will then travel to Afghanistan and meet with the soldiers again early in their deployment to catch their first impressions of the country and people. We will begin "inside the wire" showing life at Kandahar Airfield (KAF) with the "Little Canada" of Tim Horton's and ball hockey, emails and video conferencing to home, then continue outside into a whole new world. We'll be with them on their early convoys, on their early patrols.

In **Kandahar** the audience will discreetly share the day by day life of a soldier on duty; the 50 degree heat pounding down like a sledgehammer and weeks without a shower, the snakes and scorpions. Then there is the camaraderie, the teasing, the poker games and the care packages from home. Two habits for Canadian soldiers in country; smoking and good luck charms - crosses, St. Christopher medals, guardian angels, Yoda figurines, charms from all the major religions,



pictures of family and small gifts from the kids. Some soldiers don't like to video conference home too often to see their spouses, kids and lovers. "... because then it just reminds you of where you are and where you're not."

While in the country **Kandahar** will briefly meet the people of the Civil-Military Co-operation Reconstruction Teams that our soldiers defend and protect and see them at work. We'll meet members of the Afghan army and the police force who our soldiers are instructing in ethics and human rights, operating safely, conducting searches and protecting crime scenes for when they take over control of the country. The successful building of the Afghan army is a good news story for the Canadians and will be featured. They are the hope for the future stability of the country and for the eventual withdrawal of NATO forces. "These guys are on the line pretty much every day. All you can do is teach them to be effective and try to stay safe."

In one of the most heavily mined countries in the world from conflicts going back 30 years, Afghanistan is a bomb disposal expert's "treasure trove". They have caused the majority of Canadian fatalities. "You just can't think about it or you'll go crazy. And if you spend your time looking at the ground, you don't see what's happening around you: equally dangerous." We'll hope to meet the good natured anti-mine team (faces hidden for security) trying to keep the roads safe. "You know something's there and you want to get it out of the ground. It's almost a high; it's exhilarating." We'll also hope to briefly meet the front line medics: "You will not die on me!" And also the unarmed combat chaplains: "We have to be out there. That's where the soldiers are."

When our soldiers have a week's leave, where do they go? Instead of a painfully short stay back home, many decide to see exotic countries. We will interview the base travel co-ordinator about what countries are popular; Australia and New Zealand, a cruise down the Nile, a wild game safari in Africa; Bangkok, Bombay or Dubai. "One soldier always wanted to go to Bali but he was concerned," she laughs. "After months of rockets flying over his head in Afghanistan, he was worried that Bali wouldn't be safe!"

Near the end of our soldiers' rotation we will return to Afghanistan to meet the now experienced individuals during their final field missions and they will talk about their feelings in the "Home Stretch", their experiences, their successes, their impressions of the war and how it has changed them.

Kandahar will then return to Canada with them, experience their homecomings and ask them to reflect on the complex emotions of being back in Canada.



"I think our role in Afghanistan shows the international community we're not a soft target."

“Even if we keep the Taliban occupied in Afghanistan, they won’t have the resources to attack outside of Afghanistan.”

But Kandahar is not about the big picture of the war in Afghanistan. It is not about the technology or the training or the strategy. It is about the human stories – the emotional journeys of Canada’s skilled and intelligent soldiers who have put their “boots on the ground” in this far off land to try and make a difference there. Some soldiers will shine and others may have difficulties. Preconceptions will be met or sometimes disappointed. Soldiers will change. And there is always the threat of injury or death.

Kandahar will be a rare opportunity for Canadian viewers to go beyond the news reports to share up close moments in a soldier’s life, an intimate and unromanticized look at the hearts and minds of young soldiers and their experience of war.



The Team:

Writer/Director Keith Ross Leckie

(EVEREST, SHATTERED CITY:THE HALIFAX EXPLOSION, THE ARROW) who served for two years with the Queen’s Own Rifles and spent time in Afghanistan in the 1980’s during the Soviet occupation which became the setting for his novel THE SEVENTH GATE.

Producer - Charles Bishop

Multi Gemini Award winner and Producer of Academy Award winning documentary feature film BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE.

Contact:
Charles Bishop
902-423-0260

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Note: Quotations in this proposal are for illustrative purposes and are from “On Assignment in Afghanistan - Maritimers At War” ©The Chronicle Herald 2007

