

AFGHANISTAN MEMORIAL VIGIL IN VICTORIA JULY 21-26

• Over 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces personnel contributed to Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan.

• Canada's 12-year military engagement in Afghanistan was the largest deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces personnel since the Second World War.

• The Canadian Armed Forces conducted operations in Afghanistan in a number of different roles involving air, land and sea assets. Military activities included combat, security, development, support and training operations in varying capacities and regions in Afghanistan.

• The Afghanistan Memorial Vigil is a memorial structure that commemorates the Fallen who were deployed in Afghanistan. It consists of 192 plaques along with interpretation information and artifacts.

• The 192 plaques represent 158 Canadian Armed Forces personnel, a Canadian diplomat, a civilian contractor with the Department of National Defence, a Canadian journalist who was embedded with the Canadian Armed Forces and 43 United States Armed Forces members who were under Canadian command during our military engagement in Afghanistan.

• The plaques were formerly part of the Kandahar Air Field cenotaph. The cenotaph was built by soldiers for soldiers to commemorate their fallen comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice while deployed in Afghanistan.

• The Afghanistan Memorial Vigil will travel to 20 cities across Canada and to Washington D.C. between May 3 and Nov. 12, 2014.

• The Afghanistan Memorial Vigil remembers and honours those who have fallen in Afghanistan. It also acknowledges the bravery, dedication, valour and professionalism of all members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have served in Afghanistan and supported the mission.

• The Afghanistan Memorial Vigil commemorates the hard work and dedication the Canadian Armed Forces have shown over the last decade of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and remembers Canada's Fallen.

• The Afghanistan Memorial Vigil provides an opportunity to thank the families and friends of CAF members and all Canadians who have shown their support for our troops and Canada's mission in Afghanistan.



190 plaques pay homage to the 201 members of Canada's Army, Navy, Air Force, a diplomat, contractor, journalist, and U.S. soldiers under Canadian command, who died in Afghanistan.

190 plaques rendent hommage aux 201 militaires de l'Armée, de la Marine et de la Force aérienne et des soldats américains sous le commandement canadien ainsi qu'un diplomate, un contracteur, un journaliste et un journaliste qui sont décédés en Afghanistan.

In Victoria the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil will be on display in the B.C. Legislature Rotunda. It will be open to the public on the following dates:

Monday, July 21
Noon to 5 p.m.

Tuesday, July 22 until Saturday July 26
8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.



A Canadian Armed Forces officer and a civilian guest visit are visibly moved by the plaques and imagery on display.
Sgt Norm McLean, Combat Camera

Canadian Armed Forces soldiers stand as honour guards during the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil ceremony at the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC, United States.
Sgt Norm McLean, Combat Camera



Afghanistan Memorial Vigil - opportunity to reflect

Alycia Coulter
CJOC HQ

The Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) 12-year mission in Afghanistan recently ended. It assisted in making the war-torn country more secure, better governed and more stable, but it did not come without sacrifice.

While serving their country with honour, 161 Canadians – 158 CAF personnel, a diplomat, a Department of National Defence contractor and a journalist – lost their lives in Afghanistan. In addition, 43 United States Armed Forces members sacrificed their lives while serving under Canadian command during operations in Afghanistan.

"One of the ways Canada is commemorating the mission in Afghanistan is by honouring the fallen through the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil, which will travel across Canada this year and in 2015," said Capt Indira Thackorie, Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) Public Affairs Officer.

The Afghanistan Memorial Vigil consists of 192 plaques representing the 204 fallen. Originally, the plaques were part of the Kandahar Air Field cenotaph – a memorial structure built for soldiers by soldiers to commemorate their fallen comrades while deployed in Afghanistan.

The first stop in the Memorial Vigil travel schedule was May 4 in Trenton, Ontario. On May 9, it was displayed in the Hall of Honour on Parliament Hill during the National Day of Honour and

some of the families of the fallen were in attendance.

Three CAF personnel – Captain Patrick Lottinville, Corporal Martin Labelle and Chief Warrant Officer David Mahon – will travel with the exhibit across Canada.

During his time in the Canadian Army, CWO Mahon has been deployed to Germany, Egypt and Afghanistan. This task, however, holds an important significance for him. The opportunity to be a part of the Vigil Party will round out his 41-year career with the CAF.

"Working with soldiers who are tasked to set up and tear down the Vigil, and then discussing the intent and meaning with Canadian citizens has been the most meaningful experience of my career," he explained. "My task is ceremonial and drill. I feel that my years in the field and on parade squares make me extremely well suited for this type of work."

At each stop, CWO Mahon works with up to 20 personnel to prepare the Vigil. Although the travel schedule has just begun, he can already see the impact the Vigil has on the crew at each site.

"Every member of the work parties understand they are being permitted to take part in something that honours their fallen comrades, and you can see this effort put forward by all personnel. It is inspiring to take part in something where every person involved is giving 100 per cent."

While the Vigil offers an opportunity for all to reflect on the mission, the emotions it evokes is different for everyone.

"For people who didn't know those who are included on the Vigil, for them it's sometimes a call to action to support those who have lost loved ones. For those who have lost family members or friends, it's a stop along the journey towards closure," said Capt Thackorie.

Over 40,000 Canadians served during the mission in Afghanistan, and thousands of other CAF members supported the mission. The Vigil stands as a reminder for everyone who has a connection to the mission to never forget those who fell. "It doesn't matter if you're a private to a colonel. If you've fought in Afghanistan, you had comrades, you lost your best buddies... your comrades in arms," said CWO Mahon.

As the final task of his career in the Canadian Armed Forces, CWO Mahon will travel with the team to the remaining stops across Canada before it returns to Ottawa between Nov. 5 and 12.

"To be entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the ceremonies are orchestrated in a manner that depicts the pride in which all of us have served is most gratifying," said CWO Mahon.

The Afghanistan Memorial Vigil will be in Victoria July 21 to 26 at the B.C. Legislature, before traveling to Canada Place in Vancouver.

Page 10 photos:

Top Left: A family member of Private First Class Benjamin J. Park looks at his loved one's photo during the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil at the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC, United States on May 22, 2014.

Sgt Norm McLean, Combat Camera

Top Right: A Canadian Armed Forces member views the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil during its showing at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario, Sept. 18, 2013.

Sgt Matthew McGregor, Combat Camera

Inset: A close up image of an individual memorial plaque for PO2 Douglas Craig Blake.

Bottom: A ramp ceremony held at Kandahar Airfield on May 20, 2010, for Colonel Geoff Parker who was killed in a Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device while traveling a NATO convoy in Kabul, Afghanistan, on May 18, 2010.

Sgt Daren Kraus, Image Tech