

Environmental Allowance Review Team visits Task Force Kabul

By Capt Mark Gough,
Task Force Kabul PAO

CAMP JULIEN, KABUL—A unique team of officers, senior non-commissioned members (NCMs) and civilian public servants descended on Task Force Kabul (TFK) February 28 to March 10 to experience what life is like for the 900 CF members deployed on *Operation ATHENA*.

The group, assembled around the CF Environmental Allowance Review Team (EART), included military personnel from the Director General Compensation and Benefits (DGCB) at NDHQ and civilian personnel from the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) in Ottawa.

"The purpose of the visit," TFK Commander Colonel Walter Semianiw

said, "was to allow the team the opportunity to gain an understanding of the role of TFK in order that they can appreciate and accurately assess the tempo and conditions being experienced by our personnel."

The EART, formed in July 2001, is mandated to conduct a review of the CF's environmental allowances. These allowances, separate from pay, are provided to CF members exposed to hazards and/or other environmental stresses above those faced by CF members in their normal daily activities.

The primary environmental allowances are:

- sea duty allowance, paid for service in CF ships;
- submarine allowance, paid for service in CF submarines;

▪ field operations allowance, paid during CF field training and operations; and

▪ aircrew allowance, paid for service on board CF aircraft.

A standard set of 20 factors is used for a comparative evaluation of the environmental hazards and stresses associated with the various allowances. Since 2001, EART members have experienced and evaluated conditions across the CF, in ships, during field training, and in various aircraft.

"We were tasked to come to Kabul," said EART member Major Martin Pesant, a 438 Tactical Helicopter Squadron pilot, "to score the hardship and risk of deployed operations compared to the environmental allowances."

TBS members were invited to participate in the visit so they could get

first-hand knowledge of conditions for CF members during deployed operations. This is important to the review because any changes to the environmental allowances will have to be approved by the TBS.

"I wanted to be with the guys when they're doing the work," said TBS member Mr. Rick Hartrick, Chief of the Compensation Reserve. "To understand in some small way, you have to do it."

During the 11-day visit, the military and civilian visitors lived and worked alongside members of TFK. They went on patrols with "B" Squadron, TFK's armoured reconnaissance squadron; they toured the camps with the Force Protection Company; they went on a transport run to the Kabul International Airport with a convoy from the transport platoon of the National Support Element; and they flew with the members of the Theatre Support Element out of Camp Mirage. ✦

DND/CF working on facilitating access to family health care

From the Assistant Deputy Minister
(Human Resources – Military)
[ADM(HR-Mil)]

Health care provision for CF families posted in Canada is a provincial responsibility, one in which the Department and the Forces have had little involvement.

The shortage of civilian doctors across Canada, however, and the scarcity of communities offering health care in both official languages may change that. These realities mean CF members cannot always find appropriate health care services for their families. The difficulty you may be having finding a family medical doctor who is accepting new patients is made more problematic by the number of moves you and your family make over the course of your CF career.

Some bases have established family medical clinics to help alleviate the problem, but no direction addressing the

situation has come from the national level because DND/CF does not have an official mandate to address this issue. Following a request from the Director of Quality of Life (DQOL) for a legal review of this issue, a working group of DND/CF and Judge Advocate General (JAG) legal advisors has been convened to identify, assess and provide recommendations on legal issues associated with the possibility of DND/CF becoming more engaged in facilitating access to CF family health care.

Once this legal review of the situation has been completed—anticipated in spring 2005—ADM(HR-Mil) staff, in consultation with key stakeholders, will develop DND/CF policy and direction to assist Base and Wing Commanders with ensuring the families of their personnel have access to appropriate health care services.

"Access to health care is recognized as an important social issue for our

military families," says DQOL Family Policy Team Leader Ms Heather Armstrong. "It is anticipated that this national-level review and the resulting policy will provide a legally sound framework and the appropriate guidance for commanders who wish to address the access to family health care at their locations."

The policy should be developed by summer 2005; until the policy is promulgated, existing family medical clinics are authorized to continue operating. Base and Wing commanders considering intervening in family health care service delivery must submit their plans to NDHQ, through their respective Environmental Chiefs of Staff, before making any binding commitments. Contact Ms Heather Armstrong at Armstrong.HJ@forces.gc.ca or at (613) 995-1837 with specific queries, and read CANFORGEN 035/05 at <http://vcds.dwan.dnd.ca/>. ✦



If you've had trouble finding a civilian doctor to treat your family's health problems, take heart – DND/CF is investigating the possibility of becoming more engaged in solving CF family health care delivery problems.

FYs 04/05 and 05/06 pay raises in place

From the Assistant Deputy Minister
(Human Resources – Military)
[ADM(HR-Mil)]

If you are a CF non-commissioned member (NCM), a general service officer (GSO), a pilot at LCol and below, or a medical or dental officer at 2Lt or Lt, you should have received your

FYs 04/05 and 05/06 raises in your mid-April pay.

"I'm very pleased with the increases," said Defence Minister Bill Graham. "These raises will aid our efforts to recruit and retain the best people for the Canadian Forces, and are consistent with our commitment to

improving the quality of life of members and their families."

"The hard-working men and women of our Canadian Forces merit these increases," Chief of the Defence Staff General Rick Hillier added. "They perform the toughest of duties to the highest standard – day in and day out."

If you're an NCM, you have received:

- A 2.25% raise, effective April 1, 2004;
- A comparability adjustment of 4.25% that reflects additional salary adjustments provided to similar Public

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