

Nation Briefs

Canada to spend \$5 billion on military vehicles

TORONTO (Reuters)—Canada will spend about C\$5 billion on light armoured vehicles for its military, the government said on Wednesday.

About \$1 billion will be used to upgrade the current fleet of light armoured vehicles, with the remainder to go toward a new generation of combat vehicles and their upkeep.

The Canadian Forces will start using the new vehicles by 2012, with a fully operational fleet intended for 2015.

"The government is committed through its Canada First Defense Strategy to renewing the Canadian Forces' core equipment," Defense Minister Peter MacKay said in a statement.

"In addition to a renewed commitment to domestic security, this defense investment creates jobs, brings economic benefits to Canadian industry, and creates and sustains long-term employment for Canadians."

The government said it is currently looking at procurement strategies and specific requirements for the projects. It said all winning contractors will be required to spend one dollar in Canada for every contract dollar awarded.

General Dynamics Land Systems - Canada, a unit of U.S.-based General Dynamics, which developed the military's current fleet of LAV III, will work with the government to upgrade the current fleet.

Contracts for three new fleets of combat vehicles are expected to be awarded for 2011. The government said the new fleets would include close combat vehicles, tactical armored patrol vehicles, and force mobility enhancement vehicles.

Qantas fined in Canada air cargo price-fix scheme

VANCOUVER (Reuters)—Australia's Qantas Airways Ltd has pleaded guilty to participating in a price-fixing conspiracy on air cargo exported on certain routes from Canada between May 2002 and February 2006, Canada's Competition Bureau said on Tuesday.

Qantas, which is the fourth carrier to be convicted in the bureau's conspiracy investigation, admitted that during this period its freight division fixed surcharges on some cargo that was trucked from Canada to the United States for onward shipment to Australia and other destinations.

The bureau fined Qantas \$155,000 for its part in the scheme, which it continues to investigate.

Last month the bureau, an arm-length government agency, fined Air France-KLM, Europe's biggest airline, and a subsidiary, Martinair, a combined \$10 million for communicating with competitors about the amount and timing of fuel surcharges on air cargo exported from Canada.

Conservatives reclaim lead in new poll

OTTAWA (Reuters)—The Conservative Party has regained a slight lead in popular support over the opposition Liberals and appears set to gain momentum over the summer, a poll released on Tuesday showed.

The Strategic Counsel survey, published in the Globe and Mail newspaper, put the Conservatives ahead of the Liberals for the first time since April. The poll showed the Conservatives with 34 percent support and the Liberals with 33 percent. The left-leaning New Democrats stood in third place at 15 percent.

A month earlier, the Liberals stood at 34 percent and the Conservatives at only 30 percent and some other polls had also revealed growing support for Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff.

The numbers show Ignatieff's honeymoon as the new opposition leader is over, the Globe cited Strategic Counsel pollster Peter Donolo as saying.

Ignatieff, who became leader in December, may have trouble grabbing Canadians' attention over the summer when Parliament is closed, while Harper can count on extensive media coverage of his meeting with world leaders at the G8 summit in Italy as well as a planned meeting with Pope Benedict XVI.

Jackson death puts focus on painkiller addiction

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Lynch says "there is an escalating public health problem related to pain that needs to be grasped," such as a wait list of over a year at one-third of Canada's multidisciplinary pain centres.

"In Canada we have six million people suffering from chronic pain that is moderate to severe. We have a problem with under-servicing that population."

"In Canada we have six million people suffering from chronic pain that is moderate to severe."

Worldwide, narcotics regulations have led to a situation where in many developing countries, patients do not have access to oral morphine when they're dying of diseases such as cancer, says Lynch.

"Internationally we have a huge problem getting access to these necessary agents to assist people with pain."

OXYCONTIN ADDICTION

But there is an equally huge problem with addiction to prescription painkillers.

Prescription drug abuse is a growing rapidly in Canada and the United States, with addiction to the painkiller Oxycontin, an oxycodone preparation, at epidemic proportions in many areas.

"The main thing is not to let the issue of diversion and the fact that some people will lie and some people will do wrong things with their drugs prevent the majority of patients who are using these meds responsibly from getting access to the medications they need in order to cope and live with their pain"

Hundreds of deaths have been associated with the drug, which also goes by the name of Hillbilly Heroin, coined because Oxycontin abuse is rampant throughout mainly poor and rural regions of the U.S.

Studies in both countries show that addiction to prescription opioids has surpassed that of street drugs such as heroin and cocaine.

"Well over 80 percent of the people who come to us are addicted to prescription opiates, mostly oxycodone."

done preparations," says Dr. John Craven.

Craven works at a large methadone prescribing clinic in London, Ontario, which, along with Atlantic Canada, has one of the highest rates of Oxycontin addiction in the country.

Approved by Health Canada about six years ago, Oxycontin was designed to be time-released. But if it is crushed or chewed and either inhaled or injected, it produces a euphoric heroin-like effect that makes the drug highly addictive.

Craven says Oxycontin addiction is an extremely difficult habit to kick even for seasoned drug users, adding that he sees increasingly more youth becoming addicted. Studies show that the potent painkiller has become the drug of choice for many teenagers.

"Every year that I've worked at our clinic the average age goes down.... We had a mother not too long ago begging us to take her two 15-year-old sons on in treatment. I mean, they do not have the capacity to get off these medications without intensive treatment."

Although the package carries a warning, teenagers in particular may not realize how dangerous Oxycontin is when used inappropriately.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Association predicts that before long, every community in America will be confronted with the issue of OxyContin abuse.

Contributing to the problem in the U.S. are the approximately 100 storefront pain clinics located in Florida which supply a black market in painkillers that extends across several states including Kentucky, West Virginia, and Massachusetts.

APPROPRIATE USE

The Canadian Pain Society emphasizes that the vast majority of people prescribed opioids for pain do not become addicted, nor do they manifest behaviours such as taking more pain medicine than prescribed, seeing multiple doctors to obtain more medication, or buying the medication on the street.

"The main thing is not to let the issue of diversion and the fact that some people will lie and some people will do wrong things with their drugs prevent the majority of patients who are using these meds responsibly from getting access to the medications they need in order to cope and live with their pain," says Lynch.

She points out that when prescribed appropriately and taken correctly, prescription opioids are safe and provide valuable relief of pain.

But as far as Craven is concerned, doctors are far too quick to prescribe these powerful painkillers.

"Many of the patients I see get offered these medications when they don't even ask for them, after dental procedures or minor procedures or minor emergency visits," he says.

"Obviously those who are addicted are pressuring their doctors for more, but I don't see people who aren't addicted pressuring them—they just get prescribed them very easily."

A 2007 study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal found that in most cases, prescription painkillers used by street drug abusers come from the medical system rather than from illicit production and distribution.

The study made a number of recommendations, including educating physicians, pharmacists and the public, reducing improper prescribing practices, expanding prescription drug monitoring programs, and developing non-opioid treatments for chronic pain.

However, Craven says the "big issue" with opioid medications is not that they treat pain per se—it's "the other things that they do."

"For people with anxiety disorders they relieve anxiety, for people with post traumatic stress disorder they relieve all sorts of emotional pain, for a person working ten hours at a factory they make the day float by."

"Doctors think they're prescribing them for pain, but in fact people are going to get them for a lot of other reasons, and that's how they get hooked. And once somebody's brain is dependant on it, it's a very hard, long-term process of ever getting back close to normal."



In L'Aquila, Italy, for the G8 summit, Prime Minister Stephen Harper greets emergency workers as he tours earthquake damage following the announcement of a Canadian-funded youth centre at the University of L'Aquila, which was badly damaged in the quake. JASON RANSOM

Raptors showcase 'amazing' flight skills

By SANDY WU
Epoch Times Staff

The skillful art of falconry, which has been practised by many cultures for thousands of years, will be on display this coming Sunday at Terra Nova Rural Park in Richmond, British Columbia.

The event will give visitors a chance to see these native birds of prey up close and hear raptor specialists from Pacific Northwest Raptors talk about the birds' natural ecology and behaviour.

The raptors will show off not only their "amazing" flight skills but also their cheeky personalities, says raptor handler Robyn Radcliffe of Duncan-based Pacific Northwest Raptors.

Radcliffe says seeing raptors, or birds of prey, up close and personal "is not something that people get to encounter very often."

Radcliffe, a biologist, says she and her mom and brother, also biologists, became interested in raptors after her brother took a falconry course when the family lived in England in 1999.

They started up Pacific Northwest Raptors in 2002 and now have about 90 birds, some of which have appeared in movies, including a turkey vulture named Judge Dredd that starred in the 2008 version of "The Andromeda Strain."

The family is dedicated to the conservation of birds of prey and other wildlife. They use their knowledge of raptor biology to teach and educate others about the birds and their habitat, part of which involves conducting educational programs in schools and universities.

"Being able to bring the birds up close to people and show them and say, 'Hey, these are really, really important in our environment, it's going to help in the future, it's going to help the conservation of these birds'—that's really what our goal is here," says Radcliffe.

Falconry traditionally involved using birds of prey such as eagles, kestrels, falcons, hawks, and peregrines for hunting and sport.

It can be seen from early literature, paintings, and poems that the ancient Chinese, Persians, and Egyptians kept



Raptor specialist Robyn Radcliffe and Storm. JEFF BARTLETT

falcons as far back as 4,000 years ago. The height of popularity for falconry in the western world was during the medieval period in Europe. Today, traditional methods of falconry still exist in Asia and many other parts of the world.

Radcliffe says Harris hawks, which are "extraordinarily intelligent," are easy to train and therefore a popular species in falconry.

"They are the only species of raptor that are truly social. They live and hunt in a pack, and because they're social they tend to bond very easily with humans.... They are amazing

birds." Working with raptors, she says, "is the best thing in the world.... I get up in the morning and I look forward to going to work. I love the birds so much it's incredible. We learn from them every single day, and they have something to teach us. It's very humbling."

Sponsored by the City of Richmond, the falconry show at Terra Nova Rural Park, 2431 Westminster Highway, will take place on Sunday July 12 from 11 am to 4 pm. Demonstrations are at 11:30 am, 1:30 pm, and 3:30 pm.

Baird called on to raise Uyghur crisis on China trip

By Jason Loftus
Epoch Times Staff

Canada's Transport and Infrastructure Minister John Baird is being asked to speak out on behalf of minority Uyghurs in northwest China, the site of violent riots in recent days, when he touches down for a ten-day trip in the country this weekend.

In a conference call with media Wednesday afternoon, Mr. Baird discussed his trip, which will include stops in the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, as well as the regions of Hong Kong and Macau, beginning July 10.

Mr. Baird says he will be in China to promote trade relationships and trade routes, including important Canadian ports in the West of the country. Baird held up the contracts that the Canadian company Bombardier has been able to obtain in China as an example of the business he hopes to achieve.

Bombardier's work in the country includes a major project that brought a rail link to Tibet from the majority Han regions of the country.

But some are concerned about the

timing of Mr. Baird's trip, which comes amid violent unrest in Xinjiang Province in the country's northwest.

What began with protests demanding the regime investigate an alleged injustice against Uyghur workers at a factory has now escalated into large scale violent rioting.

The incident has brought to the surface tensions surrounding what the Uyghurs regard as longstanding repression and discrimination against their people under communist rule.

The unrest now involves the Uyghurs, a Muslim people who have traditionally lived in the region, the majority Han Chinese who have migrated there more recently at the encouragement of the Chinese regime, and the mainly-Han Chinese security forces.

The Chinese authorities have restricted news of the events, except to highlight the suffering of Han Chinese. Reports say many have been killed.

On Wednesday's conference call, Mr. Baird touched on the issue, echoing the comments from Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon made a day earlier:

"My colleague said our government

is obviously alarmed at the reports of violence and the high numbers of casualties following yesterday protests," Baird said. "We want to call on restraint on all sides and call on the government to respect freedom of speech and information and the right to peaceful protest."

But Baird said the trip would focus on the "macro-relationship" with the Chinese, suggesting talks about the unrest would not place high on the agenda.

But Uyghurs fear that the visit of a Western official like Baird amid the turmoil will be portrayed as a sign of support for the regime.

Local Uyghur representative Rukiye Turdush is organizing a rally in Ottawa on Friday calling on Baird to make the Uyghur's plight a focus on the trip.

Mr. Turdush says to focus on business while ignoring the ongoing unrest in Xinjiang is against humanity.

"We are expecting more from the Canadian government. Uyghurs, like other Canadians, think it doesn't matter if this is China or any place, if (something like this) happens, we should stand up and speak up."

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Guess the hidden saying,
phrase or word(s) suggested
by the graphic below



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