

An Atlantic Council of Canada Roundtable with;

Dr. Sean Maloney

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‘The Effects of the American Surge in Kandahar’

February 2, 2010. The Atlantic Council of Canada

On Tuesday, February 2, 2010, the Atlantic Council of Canada, its members and guests were privileged to welcome Dr. Sean Maloney of the Royal Military College of Canada to speak about the effects of the American surge in Kandahar.

Prior to 9/11, Dr. Maloney worked extensively throughout the Middle East, studying conflicts and international peacekeeping efforts in the region. Since 2001, he has focused on the war against the Al-Qaeda movement, particularly in Afghanistan. Dr. Maloney is currently the historical advisor to the Chief of the Land Staff of the Canadian Army in Afghanistan. His work has brought him to Afghanistan regularly since 2003 to observe the coalition operations in the country, making him the first Canadian military historian to go into ground combat at the company level since WWII.

The Atlantic Council of Canada invited Dr. Maloney to come and speak to ACC members and guests about his views on the effects of the American surge in Kandahar, a region in the south of Afghanistan that has long suffered as one of the ‘hotspots’ of the Afghan conflict. Without apt state resolution mechanisms and institutions to tackle grievances, internal conflict and disputes have intensified in the region; further exacerbating what is already a highly volatile and fragile situation. Dr. Maloney discussed the establishment of Canada’s position in the conflict and its commitments to this region. Dr. Maloney is working towards constructing a narrative which will give justice to Canada’s valuable contributions to the war in Afghanistan from the early days of Operation Athena to present reconstruction and development initiatives.

With a comprehensive and practical understanding of how decades of conflict have damaged this country’s social fabric, Dr. Maloney outlined the main obstacles hindering development in Afghanistan. He also described weaknesses and failures in international peace building efforts as perceived by the Canadian public. Various arguments against Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan were presented and then rebuked through critical analysis of the assumptions and preconceptions on which such positions are based. Throughout his discussion Dr. Maloney stressed the importance of Afghan public opinion to the success of Canadian operations in Afghanistan.

In emphasizing how integral it is to maintain good relations and trust with the local communities, Dr. Maloney expressed concern that withdrawing Canadian troops in 2011 could risk losing credibility and legitimacy amongst the Afghan people.