

## Racism in the highest places

**DECONSTRUCTIONS**  
**ASAF RASHID**

Imagine the following situation: There is a man in some city - it could be any city - passing by an aesthetically pleasing piece of architecture. He decides the sight is worth capturing on video to have something to share with friends and relatives who have never been to this particular place. So far, this scene is hardly worthy of a news story or cause for police investigation. Let me add some more context. The person is shooting a video of the CN Tower, and his name is Kassim Mohamed. This changes everything.

Mohamed is a Canadian citizen of Arab decent who resides in Toronto. He shot a video of the CN Tower and a Toronto subway station. The videotapes were with him while he was on his way to visit family in Egypt in May of 2004, a trip that was rudely interrupted. He was interrogated for over 10 days by the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the RCMP on the grounds that the videotapes were potentially reconnaissance for future terrorism. Though cleared to go to Egypt, he was arrested upon arrival there, handcuffed, blindfolded and repeatedly interrogated over a course of two weeks. No evidence of any terrorist links to Mr. Mohamed was ever found. CSIS apologized for the false accusation when he returned to Canada. His story, which included a recently filed a lawsuit against the Canadian government, made the national news on October 3, when about 100 people unthreateningly filmed the CN Tower in support of him.

Why was Mohamed targeted? Capturing images of cityscapes on video is not a crime. Neither is traveling to Egypt. Those two incidents taken together only become a national security issue because his name is Kassim Mohamed. The "innocent until proven guilty" legal standard was clearly not granted to him. He was treated as guilty, through interrogation and detention, and had to prove his innocence.

He was a victim of racial profiling, a horribly racist practice of identifying particular people as being more likely to commit crimes - in this case acts of terrorism - based on their ethnic background and/or country of residence. In one way, racial profiling by CSIS and the RCMP is worse than the activities of the Ku Klux Klan: Unlike the Klan, these security officials are staff working for the federal government, paid with tax dollars.

The above case is far from isolated. On August 14, 2003, the RCMP arrested 19 South Asian Muslim men in a dawn raid and five more in the following weeks, alleging they were part of an Al Qaeda sleeper cell. They were accused of plotting to destroy the CN Tower and the Pickering Nuclear Plant in Ontario. The evidence included airline posters put up by a roommate whose father works for airline operators Lufthansa and the allegations that one of them was examining the Pickering Nuclear Plant, which would have been difficult since he was found to have been in Pakistan at the time. Despite all of the allegations being dropped, 17 of the men were still deported; seven are trying to stay in Canada. None of their names were ever publicly cleared, which has had extremely damaging consequences for all of them, including assaults, job losses and at least one broken marriage.

I can keep on playing this broken record, with such tracks as the well-known case of Maher Arar, but it would fill every page of this paper - I'm not exaggerating. I just want to emphasize a few points. A name and a face do not make a crime, but those are the "leads" that the RCMP and CSIS start with. So many public resources are being wasted on these racist investigations, rather than being spent to strengthen social services. There is only one place for racism, and that is in the trash can. I leave with a line that Kassim Mohamed gave to the media on October 3: "I don't understand this difference between being a Canadian citizen and a human being or a Muslim."

## Idiots abound

by Mike Nason

The other day I was working on a paper in the computer lab in Tilley and I was witness to some truly baffling behavior.

A mass of my fellow students had congregated around the printer which, clearly, was not working properly. As they scratched their heads and grunted in confusion I couldn't help but be reminded of monkeys gathered around the monolith. They would occasionally poke at it and recoil in fear when the great technological marvel would make a noise. The best part was that it took the better part of the forty minutes for someone to get a lab technician to address the problem. This is, I remind you, what they are there for.

So, what's my point? To put it bluntly, people are idiots. I fail to see how we could possibly solve problems like world hunger or rampant disease when we're too stupid to walk ten feet for help. On the very same day I witnessed the aforementioned spectacle in the lab, I was also privy to the actions of another idiot. This one was clicking like mad on the IE logo and was clearly frustrated that it was not opening quickly enough. When that didn't work, he tried to shut the machine down with more wild clicking and then furiously wailed on the power button when that, also, went too slowly.

Maybe I should take this opportunity to dispel a myth. Wildly clicking on things does not make said things happen faster. In fact, what you're doing is giving the computer more crap to think about which has the opposite effect of making it slower. In the long run, this is damaging to the computer. Since our tuition pays for computers, and wasting valuable resources on your idiocy isn't something I support, maybe you should treat the university's computers with more respect and care than you treat your Speak 'n Spell at home. Moral? Don't be an idiot.

Here are a few other ways in which people are idiots for example. Anyone whose cell phone goes off at the movies or especially in class is an idiot. It won't make you any less of an idiot if you have a wacky ring tone either. You're also an idiot, and a particularly rude one at that, if you loudly pack up your crap before your professor is done talking. I might point out that the likelihood of

taking fifteen seconds to do it after class probably isn't going to make you late for wherever you're going.

We can all be idiots at times, especially during or after drunkenness. We've all had bad days where we can't seem to get things straight. I'm well aware that ridding ourselves of idiocy is a Herculean task of sorts, and I'm certainly no utopian. I would really just like to see an effort towards lessening the day to day stupidity of humanity. It is, I would think, a collaborative effort. We must warn each other of our idiocy. If you see someone doing something particularly idiotic, and it doesn't appear that they would beat your ass, do inform them of their stupidity. With diligence, I'm confident we can build a better tomorrow where people don't put sweaters on dogs and harnesses on children, provided we don't get distracted by any shiny things.

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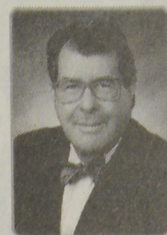
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## Submarine tragedy Canada's latest in long line of fumbles

Fire on HMCS Chicoutimi a result of ignoring military needs

by Anthony Near

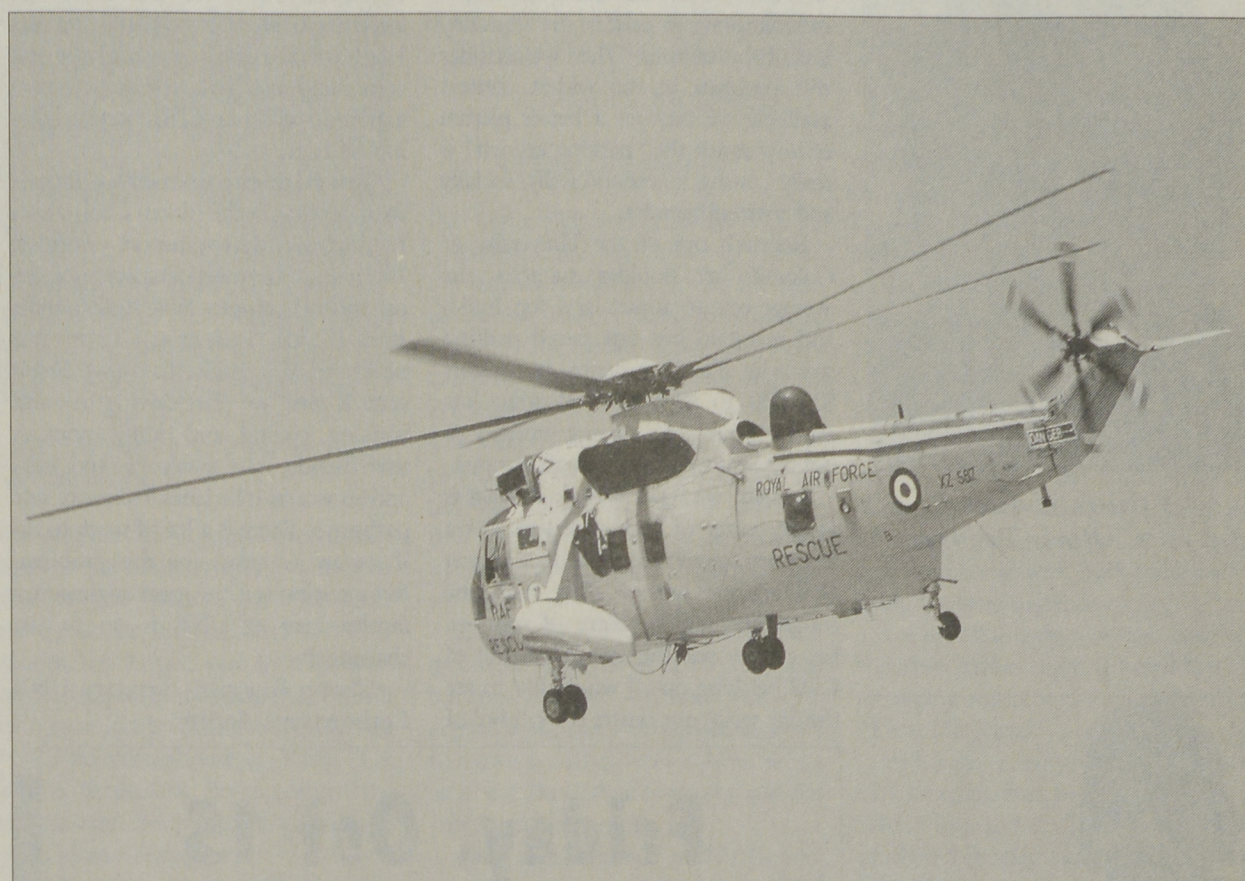
Only days after Canada took hold of its newest submarine, the HMCS Chicoutimi, it has already killed one sailor and threatened the lives of others. The Chicoutimi only became property of the Canadian people on October 2 and three days later, during its maiden voyage, a fire broke out in the submarine. The fire originally seemed to be something relatively minor when talked about by the prime minister, but ended up injuring six (two seriously) and causing the death of another. This entire incident has brought to the limelight once again the federal government and Canadian society's disregard and lack of respect for the Canadian military.

HMCS Chicoutimi is one of four Victoria class submarines purchased from the British Royal Navy in 1998. The sub has been plagued with problems ever since the British Navy built it in the 1980s. Since Canada negotiated the purchase of the sub, the HMCS Chicoutimi has had problems such as rust, cracks, and work needed on its pumps and bilge system. When our so-called state of the art sub lost its power, all communications went out, but luckily there was a cell phone around so the commander could make a call to Canada for help. How many of these ailments, if any, contributed to the fire and the death of the sailor is yet to be known.

The Canadian people, through ushering in successive anti-military Liberal governments, have truly punished and embarrassed the military.

Due to budget cuts and political stumbling, the air force has been perhaps the most heavily burdened with embarrassments and mishaps. During the Kosovo campaign, Canada sent a tiny contingent of six CF-18 fighters (out of many hundreds of other jet fighters) to try and show that Canada was pulling its weight in NATO. Canada had to borrow everything from munitions to parts during the campaign. A year ago, then-Defence Minister John McCallum admitted more than half of Canada's Hercules aircraft (often called the work-horse of the air force) were grounded due to mechanical problems related to age. To fix this problem, the air force would contract out the maintenance of the planes because the air force didn't have enough maintenance personnel. One can also never forget to leave out Canada's illustrious Sea Kings that many aviators have been killed flying. These helicopters require an astounding 30 hours of maintenance for every hour of flying and trying to pick its replacement has taken close to 20 years due to political fumbling.

The Navy has not been spared embarrassment either, even before the HMCS Chicoutimi. Canada has trouble sustaining just a few ships at sea for any prolonged length of time. There is lots of speculation that Canada's four



In addition to submarine problems, the Canadian military has been plagued with other faulty equipment and machines, including Sea King helicopters, which have been known to crash.

destroyers will be mothballed before too long due to budget constraints. There is also no ship in the Canadian Navy that can be used to transport troops or equipment. This was embarrassingly pointed out to the Canadian public in the summer of 2000 when a private transport ship, the GTS Katie, refused to dock in Canada while Canadian military equipment was on board due to a payment dispute.

The army cannot be left out either. Canada sent soldiers with the wrong camouflage to Afghanistan then tried to remedy the situation by giving them desert-coloured blankets. Again, Canadian soldiers had to borrow from other countries everything from Humvees to ammunition. Furthermore, Canada had a very difficult time sustaining these troops in the field. The Canadian army is chronically under funded with vast amounts of rapidly deteriorating equipment.

The sad part is there are many more inadequacies, embarrassments, and fiascos the Canadian military is going through. The HMCS Chicoutimi incident is just another example of the disrespect Canada has for its military. The blame can be pinned onto the Canadian people as a whole. Citizens elected and continue to elect the federal Liberals who do not provide the armed forces the resources they need. Until the people of Canada decide to throw the Liberals into opposition status or apply an immense amount of pressure on the party, things will never change. Since change does not appear imminent, expect more tragic and embarrassing incidents such as the HMCS Chicoutimi. After all, as Defence Minister Bill Graham says, "there are risks in being in our navy."

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## Are you interested in volunteering?

The International students' Advisor's Office has opportunities for students to volunteer in the BUDDY PROGRAM

Volunteers will help in running the Communications Circle Program. Sessions will be held once a week.

For more information, please drop by the Alumni Building, Room 18 and fill out a Registration form (453-4860).