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Military vehicles from U.S. firm

**Hamilton Spectator wire services**  
OTTAWA (May 7, 2007)

The Defence Department has quietly signed a deal with a U.S. defence contractor to acquire 10 heavily armoured patrol vehicles.

The \$8.8-million US deal was announced by Force Protection, Inc., of Charleston, S.C., on its website.

The company will manufacture 10 Buffalo and Cougar mine-protected vehicles -- five each -- for the Canadian expeditionary force command.

The trucks, which have a V-shaped hull meant to deflect the blasts of roadside bombs, are expected to be delivered in August and are destined for duty in Afghanistan.

Defence has not commented on the purchase or explained why the vehicles are necessary after last year's acquisition of 75 RG-31 Nyalas from a South African subsidiary of British-owned BAE Systems Inc. Unlike the Nyala, the new trucks have no windows and are capable of carrying more troops and equipment.

In another development, a new poll suggests 54.6 per cent of Canadians would want the country's troops pulled out of Afghanistan if casualties climb. That compares with 39.3 per cent who consider casualties an unfortunate but necessary part of the military mission. Since 2002, 54 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed.

The poll, conducted by SES Research for Sun Media, also indicates Canadians are split over how the government is handling the war, with 48 per cent disagreeing with the government's course and 44 per cent supporting it. And a whopping 67 per cent said they believe Canada's presence in Afghanistan is making the country more vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

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