

## **I was 'misunderstood': Fox talking head Apology for mocking Canadian military**

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The host of a Fox News show has apologized for bashing the contribution of Canadian troops in Afghanistan, saying his "satirical take" on daily news events has been misunderstood.

Greg Gutfeld, host of Red Eye, was responding to outrage in Canada about a segment that aired March 17, but sparked a diplomatic flap when it surfaced on YouTube over the weekend, following the deaths of four Canadian soldiers in Kandahar.

The apology came hours after Gutfeld posted this message yesterday on Twitter: "My apologies to the Canadian military, they probably could at least beat the Belgians."

In the five-minute segment, the show's panellists took a number of shots at Canada and the military, with one saying he didn't know the country had even deployed troops in Afghanistan. Another said the only reason the military could pull its soldiers out of the NATO-led mission was because it relies heavily for security on the United States.

Defence Minister Peter MacKay launched a counterattack on Gutfeld, saying the comments were in poor taste, and ask for an apology.

"I think it is a very limited, uninformed view. It is crass. It is insensitive and it is, in fact, disgusting given the timing, where Canada is just receiving back four fallen heroes ... at CFB Trenton," MacKay told CTV Newsnet.

MacKay said the views expressed on the show do not reflect those of the U.S. government, which has been effusive in its praise of Canada, or the "vast majority of Americans."

Fox offered an apology a few hours later, saying comments on the show were "in no way an attempt to make light of troop efforts."

"I realize that my words may have been misunderstood. It was not my intent to disrespect the brave men, women and families of the Canadian military, and for that I apologize. Red Eye is a satirical take on the news, in which all topics are addressed in a lighthearted, humorous and ridiculous manner," Gutfeld said in a statement.

The YouTube clip had more than 106,000 hits and more than 7,000 comments, most from Canadians furious that the show trashed Canadian troops, called them slackers and also poked fun at the Mounties.

The segment aired after Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie, Canadian Forces chief of land staff, told a Senate committee the military would need a year-long break from operations after the mission in Afghanistan winds down in 2011.

In the clip, Gutfeld says the Canadian military "wants to take a breather to do some yoga, paint landscapes, run on the beach in gorgeous white capri pants."

"Isn't this the perfect time to invade this ridiculous country? They have no army!" he asks the panel.

Panellist Doug Benson replies: "I didn't even know they were in the war. I thought that's where you go when you don't want to fight. Go chill in Canada. I guess that'll be their tourism selling point: We're not in the war for a year. So come on by while we nap."

Another panellist, Bill Schultz, takes a pot shot at the Mounties later. "We have police officers and they have Mounties. Our cops ride heavily armoured cars, they ride horses. We have bulletproof vests, they have wonderful little red jackets that can be seen a mile away. This is not a smart culture, Greg."

David Bercuson, a fellow at the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute in Calgary, said he wasn't surprised at the ignorance and called the host and the panellists "a bunch of dummies. I don't want to watch it (the segment) and get upset. But somebody out there in TV-land in the U.S. could be watching the show at 3 a.m. and continue to get wrong idea of what our soldiers are doing. They were clearly stupid and insensitive."

Jack Granatstein, professor emeritus at York University, who writes on 20th-century Canadian history, called it "a stupid segment ... They (host and panellists) are fools. As far as I am concerned, we should not pay any attention to them."

New Democrat MP and defence critic Dawn Black said she was disgusted with the comments. "We have lost 116 soldiers and countless others are seriously injured, and to have a second-rate news agency treat our sacrifices with derision fills me with sadness."