

Capreol war veteran remembers glory days of Petawawa regiment

By Darren MacDonald
Northern Life

What most Canadians will remember about the Canadian Airborne Regiment after it's disbanded this weekend is the graphic hazing video, showing vomiting recruits smeared in feces and urine. Or they may recall the videos made in Somalia, where Airborne soldiers made racist comments about the people they were there to protect.

But few will remember that the Airborne was once a battalion, not a regiment, and that it played a big part in the D-Day invasion during the Second World War.

One person who will remember, however, is Mike Ball, a member of the Airborne who landed on D-Day.

"There wasn't any foolishness like (hazing) when I was in the Airborne," said Ball, who lives in Capreol. "We wouldn't have had any time for it anyway."

Ball headed to Canadian Forces Base Petawawa over the weekend to watch the formal disbandment process take place. While he

condemns what went on in the videos, he's equally critical of Defence Minister David Collette's decision to scrap the entire regiment.

"It's all politics," said Ball, "It never should have happened. It's being done to make the government look good."

Ball said he can't understand why an entire regiment is being discarded because of the action of a minority of its soldiers.

"I don't condone what was in the videos, not at all," he said. "It was disgusting. But why punish the soldiers? It should have been the guys at the top that should have been crucified."

The ceremonies officially disbanding the regiment took place this weekend at CFB Petawawa. A final parachute drop was held on Saturday, and today (Sunday) a church parade will formally close the books on the Canadian Airborne Regiment.

For Ball, it's not how he imagined his former unit would go out.

"I just feel really bad about this," he said.



DAVID WIEWEL/NORTHERN LIFE

Mike Ball can't understand why an entire regiment is being discarded because of the action of a minority of its soldiers. He attended a special ceremony this weekend in Petawawa.