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Pentagon: Brit suspects pose real terror threat

PUBLICATION: The Sunday Herald

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: News

PAGE: A9

BYLINE: Dipesh Gadhur The Sunday Times

WORD COUNT: 505

The Pentagon has claimed that five terror suspects whom Britain wants back from Guantanamo Bay have close ties to some of al-Qaida's most high-ranking leaders.

Only days after British Prime Minister Gordon Brown took the surprise decision to call for their release, a senior American official this weekend disclosed previously classified evidence to show that the men are "extremely dangerous individuals."

Sandra Hodgkinson, who is in charge of U.S. detention policy, warned that the suspects may seek to rejoin the war on terror and could pose a risk to the U.K. if not kept under close scrutiny.

In a fresh series of allegations against the men, Hodgkinson claimed that:

– One of them had been an interpreter for Osama Bin Laden and was funded by the al-Qaida chief while living in Afghanistan. – Another detainee had "a long-term association" with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the ex-leader of al-Qaida in Iraq. – A third suspect is a "jihadi veteran" with links to a Moroccan terrorist jailed for 18 years over the 2003 Casablanca bombings.

Britain originally refused to take back the men, none of whom are British, but who have residency rights. The U-turn has prompted criticism and the new claims will increase pressure on ministers to enforce a tough security regime when the men return.

The suspects' lawyers have dismissed many of the allegations as "fantasy" and claim the Pentagon is smearing their clients to justify their incarceration at Guantanamo.

Hodgkinson, deputy assistant secretary of defence for detainee affairs, said: "Among these men are some extremely dangerous individuals . . . if they are sent back to the United Kingdom they could pose a risk if they are out on the street.

"Because of some of the extensive ties these individuals have with well-known al-Qaida (leaders), we have concerns that they will try to reconnect with some of their old counterparts and return to the fight in the sense that they will try to carry out attacks, whether it's in England or elsewhere."

Although ministers may place the men on control orders – a form of house arrest – an initial U.S. request to watch them round-the-clock is believed to have been rejected as too costly.

Reading from newly declassified files, Hodgkinson alleged Shaker Aamer, 38, a Saudi national granted leave to remain in Britain, had lived in Afghanistan on a "stipend" provided by Bin Laden and had acted, according to an unidentified source, as an interpreter for the terrorist leader.

Aamer is also alleged to have "ties" with Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaida's No. 2, and was "personally associated" with individuals who plotted an attack on parliament in 2005.

Jamil el-Banna, 44, a Jordanian citizen, is alleged to have had "a long-term association" with al-Zarqawi when the two men lived in their native country. Al-Zarqawi became al-Qaida's chief in Iraq and was behind the murder of Ken Bigley, the British engineer.

The Pentagon alleged that another suspect, Omar Deghayes, 37, a Libyan, is a "jihadi veteran" of the Bosnian war and has links to Salaheddine Benyaich, a leader of the Casablanca suicide bombings that killed 45 people. "He has direct connections to al-Qaida operatives in Europe," his file states.

Clive Stafford Smith, who represents the men, said: "This is a blatant attempt to smear my clients."

Taliban: Two released 'soon'; Sick South Korean women to be freed 'today or tomorrow'

PUBLICATION: The Sunday Herald

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: World

PAGE: A8

BYLINE: Amir Shah

WORD COUNT: 401

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – A Taliban spokesman said Saturday that two sick, female South Korean hostages would be released "soon" for the sake of good relations between the Taliban and South Korea. Neither the international Red Cross or the Afghan government could immediately confirm the claim.

The spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, said the two women would be freed because they are sick. He said the decision had been made by the Taliban's high commanders, but he said it had not yet been decided when the women would be freed.

Two Taliban leaders and four South Korean officials met Saturday for the second day of face-to-face talks over the fate of 21 South Korean hostages being held since July 19 by the militants. The two said earlier Saturday that the Koreans would "definitely" be released and possibly as soon as "today or tomorrow."

"The Taliban's big commanders have decided for the sake of good relations between the Taliban and the Korean people that without any conditions they are soon going to release two sick women," Ahmadi said.

Franz Rauchenstein, an official with the International Committee of the Red Cross, said neither the Taliban nor South Korean officials had talked to the Red Cross about facilitating the release of hostages, and that he could not confirm that two women were to be freed.

Mullah Qari Bashir, one of the Taliban negotiators, said the face-to-face talks were going well and that the Taliban were sticking with their original demand – that 21 Taliban prisoners be released from prisons in Afghanistan.

"God willing the government (of Afghanistan) and the government of Korea will accept this," Bashir said outside the Ghazni office of the Afghan Red Cross, which is acting as a neutral intermediary. "Definitely these people will be released. God willing our friends (Taliban militants in prison) will be released."

Asked when the Koreans might be freed, he said: "Hopefully today or tomorrow. I'm very optimistic. The negotiations are continuing on a positive track."

South Korea took a cautious approach to the negotiations.

"A quick release is a good thing but we don't see that the possibility of the quick release is high," a South Korean official in Seoul told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the issue.

Another Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujaheed, said the government in Kabul gave the Taliban leaders – Bashir and Mullah Nasrullah – a written guarantee also signed by American and other foreign officials that the two Taliban would be safe.

Controversial cargo plane lands

PUBLICATION: The Sunday Herald

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A7

BYLINE: Stephanie Levitz

ILLUSTRATION: Minister of National Defence Gordon O'Connor gives the thumbs up while posing for a photo with Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, chief of the air staff and Josee Verner, minister of international co-operation, in front of the new C-17 Globemaster III strategic lift aircraft at the Abbotsford International Airshow in Abbotsford on Saturday. (RICHARD LAM / CP)

WORD COUNT: 412

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. – The turbulence surrounding the acquisition of Canada's newest military aircraft gave way on Saturday to clear skies for the official landing of the massive cargo plane on Canadian soil for the first time.

The first of four Boeing C-17s that will eventually be delivered to the Canadian military soared past a mountain backdrop to land at the Abbotsford, B.C. airport as the star attraction of the annual airshow.

The arrival of Canada One, as it is being called, will allow the military to abandon its need to beg, borrow or lease heavy-lift carriers from other armies or private contractors when responding to domestic or international crises.

"With this aircraft, our Canadian Forces will be able to move critical capabilities to the places they are needed at the time they are needed," said Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor in welcoming the plane to Canada.

O'Connor chafed at opposition criticism the planes aren't necessary and the \$3.4 billion being spent to buy and maintain them should have been used instead to purchase tactical aircraft that are desperately needed on the battlefields in Afghanistan.

"The opposition always opposes," O'Connor told reporters as he was dwarfed by the 16-metre high plane on the tarmac.

"If I gave out gold bars, they'd say it wouldn't be enough. This aircraft is absolutely needed by the air force."

The four-engine planes can lift 77,500 kilograms of equipment, including battle tanks, and have room for about 100 soldiers.

The second plane is anticipated to arrive in November, and the final two should join the air force this spring.

Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, chief of the air staff, said the plane will help Canada assert its military and political sovereignty.

"This gives us two things. It gives us outsize capacity, the ability to carry really big things and independence of action," he said.

"We get to make the choices of where and when to carry the stuff. It is a very important step for us."

Both Watt and O'Connor rebuffed a report earlier this week that the high cost of the C-17s would require budget cuts for fuel supplies and maintenance for other aircraft.

"That is not true," O'Connor told reporters at an ad-hoc scrum before being hustled off to tour the aircraft.

"The national procurement budget is going up, not down."

The purchase of the strategic airlift was announced last February as one of O'Connor's first moves as defence minister; their arrival may be his last with rumours widely circulating in Ottawa that he'll be shuffled out of his post by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Monday. New plane smell intoxicated dozens of pilots and aircraft enthusiasts at the airfield on Saturday.

Maj. Jeremy Reynolds, who flew Canada One, as it is now known, on its inaugural flight from the factory in California to Abbotsford, said it was a dream to fly.

"It's the most modern technology you can think of," he said.

The Defence Department reinstated a squadron at 8 Wing/Canadian Forces Base Trenton to fly and do the at-home maintenance for the planes.

Canadian troops injured in ambush

PUBLICATION: The Sunday Herald

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: Front

PAGE: A2

WORD COUNT: 92

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) – Five Canadian soldiers were slightly injured on Sunday when their convoy was attacked by a roadside bomb and rocket-propelled grenades.

Lt.-Cmdr. Hubert Genest says the victims were in an RG31 light-armoured vehicle in a supply convoy when they were ambushed about 13 kilometres west of Kandahar at 1:20 a.m. local time.

They had just supplied the Ma'sum Ghar base and were about halfway back to the base at Kandahar when they were attacked.

The injured were brought back to the Ma'sum Ghar camp where they are waiting to be transferred by helicopters to the hospital at the Kandahar base.

Afghans: Show us weapons; Canada promised to deliver assault rifles months ago

PUBLICATION: The Sunday Herald

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: Front

PAGE: A1

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Martin Ouellet

ILLUSTRATION: Lt.-Col. Sherinshaw Khobandi: 'I'm hoping and waiting for that day (to) come.' (Martin Ouellet / CP)

WORD COUNT: 259

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Toting obsolete equipment and an arsenal dating back to the Soviet era, the Afghan National Army says it's waiting for modern weapons promised by Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor.

The Afghan army, which Canada is counting on to take over fighting against the Taliban in coming months, still has yet to receive C-7 assault rifles and ammunition the Canadian government pledged to deliver, said Lt.-Col. Sherinshaw Khobandi.

In Ottawa, a Defence Ministry spokesman confirmed that supplies for the Afghan National Army are planned, but declined to specify a date when they will be delivered.

Khobandi said O'Connor should have replenished the arsenal, at least in part, during his last visit. O'Connor's last public trip to Afghanistan was in March.

"We had a good talk with him," he said through an interpreter during a visit to the Kandahar multinational base on Saturday.

"I suggested that he could help us with some weapons and some ammunition. His recommendation was that within the next few months, he'll supply us with brand new equipment from (the) Canadian Forces."

The C-7 delivery delay has slowed the preparation of Afghan recruits and stalled their takeover of combat operations against the Taliban. For now, Afghan soldiers must rely on Soviet-era weapons, such as the Kalashnikov AK-47.

At best, the AK-47s are not as precise and have a shorter range than the C-7, which is the Canadian version of the American M-16.

Khobandi is waiting for the weapons with impatience.

"I'm hoping and waiting for that day (to) come," he said.

"So that we can work together with the Canadian Forces, with their new equipment and then we'll be trained with the new Canadian equipment for future operations."

In the meantime, the Afghan military has a lot of work to do before it can match the firepower and challenge insurgents in place of Canadian troops.

In Kandahar province, less than 500 men are sufficiently trained and ready for combat.

Afghan Army still waiting for promised arms from Canada

PUBLICATION:	The Telegram (St. John's)
DATE:	2007.08.12
SECTION:	World
PAGE:	A8
SOURCE:	The Canadian Press
BYLINE:	Martin Ouellet
DATELINE:	Kandahar, Afghanistan
ILLUSTRATION:	Afghan Army Lt. Col. Sherinshaw Khobandi speaks to the media Saturday at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. Khobandi said he wants Canada to deliver a promised shipment of arms and ammunition. – Photo by The Canadian Press
WORD COUNT:	293

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Canada's new tactical group commander in the Kandahar province, Lt.-Col. Alain Gauthier, remains optimistic.

Gauthier said Afghan soldiers will have sufficient numbers and will be adequately trained to secure districts around Kandahar City.

"This will permit us (the Canadian military) to enlarge our field of action farther into the province," said Gauthier, who replaced Lt.-Col. Rob Walker.

What will happen to Pakistan?

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: Opinion

PAGE: A7

BYLINE: Dyer, Gwynne

WORD COUNT: 843

"There's going to be a civil war." You heard it all the time in the old Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s. People fretted about it constantly in South Africa in 1994. They have been worrying about it in Lebanon for the past year.

Now they're predicting it for Pakistan – but nine times out of 10, the forecast is false.

The Soviet Union broke up with remarkably little violence, although there were some nasty little wars in various non-Russian republics down south. Apartheid's end in South Africa was astonishingly non-violent, given all that had gone before. There was a ghastly civil war in Lebanon in the late '70s and '80s, but the odds are better than even that there will not be another.

And there probably won't be a disaster in Pakistan either.

"We are very scared," Senator Enver Baig of the opposition Pakistan People's Party told the Guardian last week. "If we don't mend our ways, it could spell the end of the country. The Islamists have sleeper cells in every city. We could have a civil war."

And if the "Islamists" won that civil war, then people with a world-view not dissimilar to Osama bin Laden's would control a country with 165 million people, an army of 600,000 men, and an estimated 50 nuclear weapons.

But the civil war hasn't happened yet, and it may never come to that.

What to watch for

In fact, there are as many hopeful signs as frightening ones in the current turmoil in Pakistan, although it is getting hard to read the tea leaves.

Pakistan is certainly becoming unstable. The government has effectively lost control in the tribal belt along the frontier with Afghanistan, which is increasingly dominated by pro-Taliban militants. The week-long siege of radical Islamists holed up in the Red Mosque in Islamabad, the capital, in mid-July culminated in the deaths of over 100 militants and soldiers.

The military dictator who has ruled Pakistan since 1999, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, is a living incarnation of the phrase "one-bullet regime": he has already survived four assassination attempts. More than 200 Pakistani soldiers and civilians have died in terrorist attacks since the Red Mosque incident, and the alarmists are predicting civil war and Islamist takeover.

On the upside

On the other hand, there is a thriving free press in Pakistan, including (at last) independent television stations that actually report the news. The economy has been growing fast in recent years, and at least a bit of the new prosperity is trickling down to the impoverished majority.

Musharraf is the fourth general to seize power in Pakistan's 60-year history, but the country always returns to civilian rule in the end. And late last month, Pakistan's supreme court, in an act of defiance against military rule, threw out Musharraf's accusations of corruption against the chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

The charges were fabricated to ensure that the chief justice did not interfere with the general's plans for another five-year presidential term. (He planned to have himself reappointed by very same national and regional assemblies, chosen in rigged elections in 2002, that obediently voted to appoint him five years ago – without any new election to renew their membership.)

What actually happened, however, was that the charges turned Chaudhry into a national hero and a focus for resistance to the continuation of thinly disguised military rule.

There is a good chance that this crisis could end in a restoration of civilian democracy in Pakistan: that is how all three previous bouts of military rule ended.

The fanatics and the extremists dominate the sparsely populated areas along the Afghan frontier because the population there is identical to the Pashtuns across the border who are the main base of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and they have been radicalized by 28 years of foreign occupation and civil war in that country.

But the vast majority of Pakistanis live down in the flat, fertile lands along the rivers, and what they want is not martyrdom but peace, justice and prosperity.

They stand a better chance of getting those things if democracy returns, even if previous intervals of democracy in Pakistan have usually ended in massive corruption and paralysis as the political class fought over the spoils.

Musharraf is probably on the way out unless he declares martial law under the pretext of fighting the Islamists – and it is not certain that the army would follow him if he did.

So he is trying for fake democratization. Twice, in January and again last month, he met secretly in Abu Dhabi with Benazir Bhutto, the exiled head of the largest opposition party, trying to make a deal that would let her return as prime minister (for the third time) but leave him as president.

That would be a big mistake on Bhutto's part, but it wouldn't be the first.

Despite the highly publicized violence in Pakistan, there is little chance that it will fall under Taliban-style rule. There is perhaps a one-in-three probability that Musharraf will cut a deal with Bhutto that leaves him in power for a while, but that wouldn't really end the crisis.

And the odds on a return to real democracy within the year are probably better than even.

It would be nice if Pakistan's fractious and venal politicians could make it work this time.

Gwynne Dyer is a Newfoundlander and a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries. His new book, "The Mess They Made: The Middle East After Iraq," is a non-fiction bestseller.

Get us out of Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: Editorial

PAGE: A6

COLUMN: Letter to the editor

WORD COUNT: 100

Gen. Rick Hillier was all gung-ho going into Afghanistan. To paraphrase, he talked about kicking ass and killing scumbags. Too bad he never read a history book. Nobody – but nobody – conquers or inflicts their will on the Afghans. (When not fighting foreigners, they're constantly making war on neighbouring clans.)

It's a real shame Canadian soldiers are dying there for nothing, just political posturing. (Think Vietnam.)

U.S. President George Dubya's new poodle (replacing Britain's Tony Blair) – our very own Czar Harper – needs to wake up and smell the coffee.

Enough already.

S.J. Eason

Victoria, B.C.

Canada's new cargo aircraft arrives

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.08.12

SECTION: National

PAGE: A5

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Stephanie Levitz

DATELINE: Abbotsford, B.C.

ILLUSTRATION: An official guides the C-17 Globemaster III (also shown inset) into position after it landed at the Abbotsford International Airport, in Abbotsford, B.C., Saturday. – Photos by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 534

The turbulence surrounding the acquisition of Canada's newest military aircraft gave way Saturday to clear skies for the official landing of the massive cargo plane on Canadian soil for the first time.

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The arrival of "Canada One," as it is being called, will allow the military to abandon its need to beg, borrow or lease heavy-lift carriers from other armies or private contractors when responding to domestic or international crises.

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O'Connor chafed at opposition criticism the planes aren't necessary and the \$3.4 billion being spent to buy and maintain them should have been used instead to purchase tactical aircraft that are desperately needed on the battlefields in Afghanistan.

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"If I gave out gold bars, they'd say it wouldn't be enough. This aircraft is absolutely needed by the air force."

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"We get to make the choices of where and when to carry the stuff. It is a very important step for us."

Both Watt and O'Connor rebuffed a report last week that the high-cost of the C-17s would require budget cuts for fuel supplies and maintenance for other aircraft.

"That is not true," O'Connor told reporters at an ad-hoc scrum before being hustled off to tour the aircraft. "The national procurement budget is going up, not down."

The purchase of the strategic airlift was announced last February as one of O'Connor's first moves as defence minister; their arrival may be his last, with rumours widely circulating in Ottawa that he'll be shuffled out of his post by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Monday. New plane smell intoxicated dozens of pilots and aircraft enthusiasts at the airfield on Saturday.

Maj. Jeremy Reynolds, who flew "Canada One" on its inaugural flight from the factory in California to Abbotsford, said it was a dream to fly.

"It's the most modern technology you can think of," he said.

The Defence Department reinstated a squadron at 8 Wing/Canadian Forces Base Trenton to fly and do the at-home maintenance for the planes.

Thirty-two pilots, 24 loadmasters, 10 maintenance management staff and 96 technicians were selected.

Among the soldiers who will most feel the effects of having the new planes are members of Canada's Disaster Assistance Response Team. Loads that took 24 flights in a Hercules to deploy to the tsunami disaster zone in southeast Asia in 2004 will now take just one trip. "It's going to be very fast and very efficient," said Leading Seaman Jean-Francois Grenier, who travelled with DART three years ago.

Controversy had erupted when the contract for the planes was awarded to Boeing because the deal was fast-tracked through the normal competitive bidding process. Small contractors also said the government's decision not to buy the rights associated with maintaining the aircraft would damage Canadian industry.

Taliban say two South Korean hostages freed

IDNUMBER 200708120025
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
COLUMN: World Briefing
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 76

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – Afghan–istan's hardline Taliban said yesterday it had freed two female South Korean hostages captured more than three weeks ago, but officials could not immediately confirm the claim.

Two spokesmen for the insurgents said both women were ill and had been freed as a "gesture of goodwill," just hours after talks between the Taliban and a South Korean delegation.

The women had not been handed over to authorities by late yesterday, a Western official close to the process said.

Five Canadian troops injured in Afghan ambush

IDNUMBER 200708120009
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: Canwest News Service
WORD COUNT: 138

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Five Canadian soldiers were injured early today after their supply convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents.

The soldiers were travelling in an RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy that was supplying a Canadian forward-operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City.

On their way back from Masum Ghar, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road.

The convoy then came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades.

None of the soldiers was critically injured in the blast. They were evacuated to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan. In line with military policy, their names were not released.

All but one of the soldiers were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, also known as the Van Doos. However, it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec.

Military officials could not say if the IED was remotely detonated or "pressure plated." The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb.

Taliban refuses to free sick hostages: Report

IDNUMBER 200708120035
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Met
SECTION: News
PAGE: A04
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 223

Afghanistan's Taliban has decided not to free any of 21 South Korean hostages despite earlier saying two women could go, the Korea's Yonhap news agency reported.

Yonhap quoted Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi as saying: "Our leaders have changed their minds and decided not to free two female hostages."

South Korean officials refused to confirm the report.

After face-to-face talks yesterday between the Taliban and a South Korean delegation, Ahmadi told AFP that the two women, who are reported to be ill, were being released unconditionally as a "gesture of goodwill."

The Taliban abducted 23 Christian aid workers in volatile southern Ghazni province on July 19. The workers were travelling on a key highway linking the capital Kabul and the southern city of Kandahar, which many foreigners consider a no-go area because of a general decline in security. Two male hostages have been shot dead, and the insurgents have threatened to kill the rest unless militants are released from jail in exchange for their lives.

"The hostages will be freed if the government accepts our demands to free some prisoners," one of the negotiators, Qari Bashir, said. "If they accept our demands, maybe they'll be freed today or tomorrow." But Kabul, backed by Washington, has refused to accept that demand, fearing it would only encourage more kidnappings.

The government in Seoul, meanwhile, says it is powerless to bring about a prisoner release.

Agence France-Presse

Afghans await weapons

IDNUMBER 200708120032
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Met
SECTION: News
PAGE: A04
ILLUSTRATION: Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor pledged to upgrade Afghan arsenal.;
BYLINE: Martin Ouellet
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 172

Toting obsolete equipment and an arsenal dating back to the Soviet era, the Afghan National Army says it's waiting for modern weapons promised by Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor.

The Afghan army, which Canada is counting on to take over fighting against the Taliban in coming months, still has yet to receive C-7 assault rifles and ammunition the Canadian government pledged to deliver, said Lt.-Col. Sherinshaw Khobandi.

In Ottawa, a defence department spokesperson confirmed that supplies for the Afghan National Army are planned, but declined to specify a date when they will be delivered.

Khobandi said O'Connor should have replenished the arsenal, at least in part, during his last visit. O'Connor's last public trip to Afghanistan was in March.

"We had a good talk with him," he said through an interpreter during a visit to the Kandahar multinational base yesterday.

"I suggested that he could help us with some weapons and some ammunition. His recommendation was that within the next few months, he'll supply us with brand new equipment from (the) Canadian Forces."

The C-7 delivery delay has slowed the preparation of Afghan recruits and stalled their takeover of combat operations against the Taliban.

For now, Afghan soldiers must rely on outdated Soviet-era weapons.

Khadr plea wins ovation; U.S. defender applauded by Canadian lawyers as he urges Bar Association to help 'child soldier'

IDNUMBER 200708120026

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Ont

SECTION: News

PAGE: A02

ILLUSTRATION: Larry MacDougall for the Toronto Star Lt.-Cmdr. William Kuebler, a U.S. military lawyer assigned to defend Omar Khadr, speaks to the Canadian Bar Association in Calgary yesterday. ;

BYLINE: Tracey Tyler

SOURCE: Toronto Star

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 328

The last time Lt.-Cmdr. William Kuebler saw his client Omar Khadr, the only things the Guantanamo Bay prisoner wanted were some crayons and paper.

It was an insight into the deteriorating, child-like mental state of the 20-year-old Canadian and the only Westerner still locked up at the U.S. naval base in Cuba, who has now spent a quarter of his life incarcerated on terrorism charges, he said.

Kuebler, a U.S. military lawyer assigned to Khadr's defence four months ago, was at the Canadian Bar Association conference yesterday to urge the country's largest legal organization to take up Khadr's cause, much as law societies in Australia and Great Britain have done for other Guantanamo detainees.

He was met with a standing ovation by members of the organization's governing council – and a vow from its outgoing president to work to end the "travesty of justice" confronting a Canadian citizen.

"I think it's time for all Canadians to be speaking out to end this horrendous lack of due process," president Parker MacCarthy told reporters at a news conference immediately after Kuebler's remarks. Parker said he's confident the association will support efforts to lobby Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

While the Canadian government continues to affirm its faith that Khadr will be well-treated by his jailers and the U.S. military commission assigned to hear his case, Kuebler noted the Australian government arranged to have one of its citizens, David Hicks, returned home under a plea arrangement after growing public concern in that country about the lack of due process at U.S. terrorism tribunals.

Khadr is being made to pay "for the sins of his father," Ahmed, who had ties to Osama bin Laden, and recruited and indoctrinated his son from the age of 10, said Kuebler, adding his client – just 15 when he was captured in Afghanistan in 2001 – was a "child soldier."

While the Canadian government has condemned the use of child soldiers elsewhere, it stands by while one of its own citizens deteriorates in solitary confinement, he said.

Khadr plea wins ovation; U.S. defender applauded by Canadian lawyers as he urges Bar Association to help

Afghans enthralled by TV; HEARTS AND MINDS / Under the Taliban, it was a crime to own a television set. Since their ouster, Afghans have embraced the window on the world, watching dubbed soap operas and Afghan Star with equal enthusiasm

IDNUMBER 200708120127

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Sunday Reader

PAGE: E4

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Photo: Joao Silva, New York Times / A rapt audience for the television in a barber shop in Kabul. The latest national survey, which dates from 2005, shows that 19 per cent of Afghan households own a television. ; Colour Photo: Photo: Joao Silva, New York Times / A man wheels a TV through a Kabul market. Just 14 per cent of the population has access to public electricity. ;

KEYWORDS: 0

DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan

BYLINE: Barry Bearak

SOURCE: New York Times

WORD COUNT: 1583

KABUL, Afghanistan – Seven years ago, during a very different time in a very different Afghanistan, a medical student named Daoud Sediqi was bicycling from campus when he was stopped by the Taliban's whip-wielding religious police. The young man immediately felt an avalanche of regret, for he was in violation of at least two laws.

One obvious offence was the length of his hair. While the ruling Taliban insisted that men sprout untrimmed beards, they were otherwise opposed to scruffiness and the student had allowed his locks to grow shaggy. His other transgression was more serious. If his captors searched his possessions, they would find a CD with an X-rated movie.

"Fortunately, they didn't look; my only punishment was to have my head shaved because of my long hair," recalled Sediqi, now at age 26 one of this nation's best-known men, someone sprung from a new wellspring of fame — not a warlord or a mullah, but a television celebrity, the host of Afghan Star, this nation's American Idol.

Since the fall of the Taliban in late 2001, Afghanistan has been developing in fits and starts. Among the unchanging circumstances that still leave people fitful: continuing war, inept leaders, corrupt police officers and woeful living conditions. According to the government's latest surveys, only 43 per cent of all households have nonleaking windows and roofs, 31 per cent have safe drinking water and seven per cent have sanitary toilets.

But television is off to a phenomenal start, with Afghans now engrossed, for better or worse, in much of the same escapist fare that seduces the rest of the world: soap operas that pit the unbearably conniving against the

Afghans enthralled by TV; HEARTS AND MINDS / Under the Taliban, it was a crime to own a television set.

implausibly virtuous, chefs preparing meals that most people would never eat in kitchens they could never afford, talk show hosts wheedling secrets from those too shameless to keep their troubles to themselves.

The latest national survey, which dates from 2005, shows that 19 per cent of Afghan households own a television, a remarkable total considering not only that owning a TV was a crime under the Taliban but that a mere 14 per cent of the population has access to public electricity. In a study this year of Afghanistan's five most urban provinces, two-thirds of all people said they watched TV every day or almost every day.

"Maybe Afghanistan is not so different from other places," said Muhammad Qaseem Akhgar, a prominent social analyst and newspaper editor. "People watch television because there is nothing else to do."

Reading is certainly less an option; only 28 per cent of the population is literate. "Where else can one find amusement?" Akhgar asked.

Each night, people in Kabul obey the beckoning of prime time much as they might otherwise answer the call to prayer. "As you can see, there is truth on the television, because all over the world the mother-in-law is always provoking a fight," said Muhammad Farid, a man sitting in a rundown restaurant beside the Pul-i-Khishti Mosque, his attention fixed on an Indian soap opera that had been dubbed into Dari, one of Afghanistan's two official languages.

Women, whose public outings are constrained by custom, most often watch their favourite shows at home. Men, on the other hand, are free to make TV a communal ritual. In one restaurant after another, with deft fingers dipping into mounds of steaming rice, patrons sit cross-legged on carpeted platforms, their eyes fixed on a television set perched near the ceiling. Profound metaphysical questions hover in the dim light: Will Perna find happiness with Bajaj, who is after all not the father of her child?

"These are problems that teach you about life," said Sayed Agha, who sells fresh vegetables from a pushcart by day and views warmed-over melodramas by night.

What to watch is rarely contested. At 7:30, the dial is turned to Tolo TV for Perna, a soap opera colloquially known by the name of its female protagonist. At 8, the channel is switched for The Thief of Baghdad. At 9, it is back to Tolo for the intrafamily and extramarital warfare waged on Tulsi, the nickname for a show whose title literally means Because the Mother-in-Law Was Once the Daughter-in-Law.

Kabul has eight local television stations, including one feebly operated by the government.

"The key time slots are from 6 to 9 p.m. because that's when people switch on their generators for electrical power," said Saad Mohseni, who runs Tolo, the channel that dominates the market in most of the country. "People love the soap operas."

"We've just bought the rights to 24, the American show," he said. "We had some concerns. Most of the bad guys are Muslims, but we did focus groups and it turns out most people didn't care about that so long as the villains weren't Afghans."

Mohseni, a former investment banker, and his three siblings started Tolo TV (Tolo means dawn in Dari) in 2004, assisted by a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development. After living most of their adult lives in exile in Australia, the Mohsenis returned to post-Taliban Kabul looking for investment opportunities and discovered a nearly prehistoric television wilderness ready for settlement. People could buy a used colour TV for \$75.

But what did they want to watch? Afghan tastes had not been allowed to gestate over decades, passing from Milton Berle to Johnny Carson to Bart Simpson. Everything would be brand new.

Afghans enthralled by TV; HEARTS AND MINDS / Under the Taliban, it was a crime to own a television set. 22

"We let ourselves be guided by what we liked," Mohseni said.

For the most part, that means that Tolo has harvested every cliché from television's vast international landscape. True-crime shows introduce Afghans to the sensationalism of their own pederasts and serial killers. Reality shows pluck everyday people off the streets and transform them with spiffed-up wardrobes. Quiz shows reward the knowledgeable: how many pounds of mushrooms did Afghanistan export last year? A contestant who answers correctly earns a free gallon of cooking oil.

Some foreign shows, like those featuring disasters and police chases, are so non-verbal that Tolo is able to rebroadcast them without translation. Other formats require only slight retooling.

Sediqi is about to begin his third season with Afghan Star. He has never seen American Idol and said he had never heard of his American counterpart, Ryan Seacrest. Nevertheless, he ably manages to introduce the competing vocalists and coax the audience to vote for their favourites via cellphone.

Another knockoff is Khanda Bazaar, or Laughter Bazaar, which derives from Afghan Star with the same week-to-week elimination of a performer. Standup comics do their routines and voters select their favourites.

"I must tell you that I am having very good fun," Sediqi said, employing his limited English. He is one of several young stars at Tolo whose hipness is exotic enough to seem almost extraterrestrial to an average Afghan. Older men who prefer soap operas to singing competitions are likely to want to give Sediqi a good thrashing.

"People in the countryside and the mosques say the show is ruining society," Sediqi admitted.

Tolo has drawn a huge audience while testing the bounds of certain taboos. Zaid Mohseni, Saad's younger brother, said: "When we first put a man and woman on the air together, we had complaints: this isn't legal, this isn't Islamic, blah, blah, blah. Then the criticism softened. It was OK as long as they don't talk to each other. Finally, it softened more: OK, they can talk as long as they don't laugh."

The bounds are pushed but not broken. A live talk show called Woman is co-moderated by a psychiatrist, Dr. Muhammad Yasin Babrak. While female callers are frank in their laments, the therapist limits himself to being Dear Abby to the lovelorn rather than Dr. Ruth to the sexually frustrated. "I won't talk about incest or homosexuality," he said.

Music videos, primarily imports from India, are broadcast regularly. With a nod to Afghan tradition, the bare arms and midriffs of female dancers are obscured with a milky strip of electronic camouflage. And yet, sporting events are somehow deemed less erotic. Maria Sharapova was shown at Wimbledon with the full flesh of her limbs unconcealed.

Whatever the constraints, some observers consider TV a portal to promiscuity. "Forty million people are living with HIV-AIDS, and television is finally helping Afghanistan contribute to those figures," the Ayatollah Asif Mohseni said with sarcasm.

He is an elderly white-bearded man, and while he is not related to the family who runs Tolo TV, he, too, has entered the television business, starting a station more inclined to showcase Islamic chanting. "We have an economy that is in ruins," Mohseni said. "Do you think rubbish Indian serials with half-naked people are the answer?"

The strongest complaints against Tolo have come from politicians, including members of the government. Tolo's news coverage, while increasingly professional, is very often unflattering and even irreverent. Members of Parliament have been shown asleep at their desks or in overheated debate throwing water bottles.

Afghans enthralled by TV; HEARTS AND MINDS / Under the Taliban, it was a crime to own a television set.

One lawmaker was photographed picking his nose and then guiltily cleaning his finger.

In April, when Attorney General Abdul Jabar Sabet thought he had been quoted out of context, he sent police officers to Tolo's headquarters to arrest the news staff. The ensuing contretemps had to be mediated by the UN mission in Kabul.

"It has been quite odd," said Saad Mohseni, Tolo's chief. "This is Afghanistan, a young democracy, and we don't have problems with the drug dealers or the Taliban or even the local populace. Our problems are all with the government, either because of red tape or attempted censorship or someone with a vested interest trying to extract money."

He paused for effect.

"With democracy comes television. It's hard for some people to get used to."

Taliban backtrack on promise to release female hostages

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PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: World Digest
KEYWORDS: HOSTAGES; WAR; TERRORISM; KIDNAPPING
DATELINE: SEOUL
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 86

SEOUL – Afghanistan's Taliban has decided not to free any of 21 South Korean hostages despite earlier saying two women could go, the Korea's Yonhap news agency reported Sunday citing an insurgents' spokesman.

Yonhap quoted Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi as saying: "Our leaders have changed their minds and decided not to free two female hostages." Ahmadi had told AFP late Saturday that two female hostages, who were sick, were being released unconditionally as a "gesture of goodwill."

4 of 5 injured soldiers Van Doos; Attack comes hours after Que. regiment takes command

IDNUMBER	200708120006
PUBLICATION:	Edmonton Journal
DATE:	2007.08.12
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	News
PAGE:	A3
ILLUSTRATION:	Photo: Graham Thomson, the Journal, File / A Canadian soldier stands guard next to an RG-31, similar to the vehicle ambushed by insurgents early today. ;
KEYWORDS:	CANADIANS; WAR; ARMED FORCES; AFGHANISTAN
DATELINE:	KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE:	Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE:	CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT:	501

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Five Canadian soldiers were injured early today after their supply convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents.

None of the soldiers was critically injured in the blast. They were evacuated to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan, for treatment.

The soldiers, whose names were not released in line with military policy, were travelling in an RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy that was supplying a Canadian forward operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City.

On their way back to base, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road. The convoy then came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades.

Military officials would not say whether the IED was remotely detonated or "pressure-plated." The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb.

All but one of the soldiers were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, commonly known as the Van Doos. However, it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec.

The attack came only hours after a top Canadian military commander touted the progress Canada has made in securing the province against insurgents.

"The security situation has improved immensely over the last year," Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said Saturday as his Royal Canadian Regiment handed over command of Canada's battle group to the Van Doos.

Walker asserted that traffic along the roads around Kandahar City has increased and commerce has picked up.

"The bad news for the Taliban is they have been defeated time and time again on the battlefield. They are having less and less influence on the population of Kandahar province."

The area just west of Kandahar City, along Highway 1, has been a trouble spot for Canadians. A number of Canadian soldiers have died along that stretch of the highway, at one point earning it the nickname "Ambush Alley." Today's attack took place near that area, at the junction of Highway 1 and a small side road.

Military officials now frown on any reference to Ambush Alley, saying security along the road has improved significantly in recent months. But this latest attack suggests the nickname might still apply.

The incident could also further erode support for the military mission, which is already low in Quebec. Recent surveys suggest more than two-thirds of Quebecers oppose Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan. In June, protesters held an antiwar demonstration as soldiers paraded through the streets of Quebec City.

Command of the mission was turned over Aug. 1 to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche of the Van Doos, who has said that the focus of the mission will shift more heavily in favour of efforts to train the Afghan army to take over a greater share of the burden of safeguarding the nation's security.

As the Afghan army develops in effectiveness, fewer NATO troops, including Canadians, are expected to be on the front lines of fighting against Taliban insurgents.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said that Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan will end in February 2009, unless Parliament decides otherwise.

Altogether, 66 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Most recently, on July 4, six soldiers and an Afghan interpreter were killed when their RG-31 armoured vehicle struck an IED approximately 20 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City. Those deaths came just two weeks after three other soldiers were killed by another roadside bomb.

Russian bear on the march; Kremlin keeping U.S., allies busy with run of provocations

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PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: The Editorial Page
PAGE: A12
KEYWORDS: PRESIDENTS; POLITICS; POLITICIANS; VISITS; FOREIGN RELATIONS
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 718

Former CIA director James Wolsey, speaking in Calgary last year about the dangers Islamist terrorism posed to western oil supplies, joked that the terrorists' intransigent philosophy almost made him miss the Russians. After the formal Soviet bluster was exhausted, a vodka-soaked deal could still sometimes be squeezed out by diplomats with the stamina for informal negotiations lasting well into the early hours of the next day.

Well, Wolsey has his wish.

Fabulously enriched by energy revenues, Russia is on the march. It is driven by both President Vladimir Putin's personal ambition to restore the great-power status Russians believe is their natural destiny, and the same old imperatives its geography has dictated to czars and Communist dictators alike.

Canadians woke up to this last month when Russia claimed vast areas of the Arctic, including the North Pole.

But, for those who were paying attention, there were plenty of harbingers.

So, while the matter is of great importance to this country, murky images of a pair of Russian submersibles in northern waters must not distract Canada, or the rest of the NATO alliance, from more immediate challenges Russia offers them elsewhere.

Consider, for example, Russia's unilateral withdrawal from the Central Forces Europe Treaty, a key end-of-Cold-War agreement limiting deployment of military forces there. Ostensibly, it was a response to the U.S. missile shield. However, the shield was designed to deal with Iran's limited capabilities: It is of insufficient size to parry an attack from Russia. What, then, are Russia's intentions?

Indeed, Russia's relations with Iran are equally perplexing. It has invested heavily in the Islamic republic, which may explain some of its reluctance to join western countries in pressuring Iran over its nuclear program. Or, is its seeming acquiescence to an Iranian bomb, to be linked with Putin's charge that the U.S. wants a "unipolar" world, with Washington at the centre?

Even a casual summary of the news suggests that is the case. For instance, there were last week's reports that Russia intends to reopen a Cold War-era naval base in Syria, clearly an end run around NATO's control of the Bosphorus Strait, through Turkish membership of the alliance.

To be sure, Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations Bashar Jaafari says the report is just Israeli disinformation, and that Moscow has made no requests of Damascus. Nevertheless, NATO can hardly afford to base its planning on such obliquely worded assurances. A Russian presence on the Syrian coast would be

not only a convenient dock from which to fish in Iraq's troubled waters, but a significant escalation of the naval ante in the Mediterranean, to NATO's cost.

Then there's Russia's probing of NATO airspace in Norway and Great Britain, and of the U.S. itself in Alaska. Last week, U.S. facilities on Guam were buzzed, and smiles reportedly exchanged between Russian and U.S. pilots scrambled to meet them.

The Russian smiles, one suspects, were those of saucy delight, however. Russian bombers have also probed Iceland and Japan.

It is disconcerting to acknowledge that if they had overflowed Canada's Arctic archipelago, Ottawa would not necessarily be aware of it.

Elsewhere, Russian so-called youth movements have stirred up trouble in the Baltic republics, the failed state of Georgia is protesting an alleged missile attack by Russian jets, and Russia maintains cordial relations with Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez. (A proposed factory to manufacture Kalashnikov rifles in Venezuela must surely have more symbolic value than practical, but what is remarkable is that it was ever thought desirable).

And, for fans of John Le Carre, there is the alleged poisoning of a Russian defector in London.

It is starting to look a lot like 1977. Or for that matter, 1847.

Russia's dilemma has historically been that it has no year-round ice-free ports, and its vast distances make moving armies difficult. Whoever sits in the Kremlin, therefore, has always looked for a Mediterranean exit, influence in Iran or Afghanistan, and buffer states between Russia and potential enemies.

Putin is no different from Czar Nicholas the First, or Leonid Brezhnev. The sum total of his foreign policy, which Russia's unique position on the world island both obliges and enables, is to alter the balance of power in the Kremlin's favour by keeping the U.S. and its allies busy with small to medium-sized provocations around the world.

This whack-a-mole theory of international affairs will suspend the peace dividend until further notice. And Canada, along with the rest of NATO, will embark on a costly rediscovery of their alliance's original purpose.

Taliban leaders balk at hostage release; 'Gesture of goodwill' in doubt

IDNUMBER 200708120026
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A10
COLUMN: Asia Report: News From the Region
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Shir Ahmad, Reuters / Taliban negotiators QariBashir, left, and Mawlavi Nasrullah told reporters that talks with South Korean diplomats have been going well, but leaders of the militant group have apparently changed their minds about releasing two female hostages in a goodwill gesture. ;
KEYWORDS: FOREIGN RELATIONS; WAR; FAMILY REUNIONS; NUCLEAR WEAPONS; HOSTAGES; SUMMIT CONFERENCES; KOREAN WAR
BYLINE: Seonjin Cha
SOURCE: Bloomberg with files from Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 234

South Korea can't confirm reports that two of 21 South Korean hostages held by Taliban militants in Afghanistan were released, a government spokesman said.

A Yonhap News report said the hostages won't be released.

"I have no comment," Oh Young Jin, a spokesman at the Presidential Office in Seoul, said today by telephone. South Korean officials and Taliban are "maintaining contacts," he added, without elaborating.

The kidnappers freed two female South Korean hostages as a goodwill gesture and to accelerate talks between the Taliban and the South Korean government, China's Xinhua News Agency reported, citing Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi.

But Ahmadi told Yonhap News today the kidnappers' "leaders" had changed their minds and wouldn't release the women, the South Korean news agency reported on its website. There were no other details.

Calls to the South Korean Foreign Ministry and the Presidential Office for comment weren't immediately answered.

International Committee of the Red Cross official Franz Rauchenstein told the Associated Press that neither the Taliban nor South Korean officials had contacted the organization about facilitating a release of hostages.

The police chief of Ghazni, Alishah Ahmadzai, said earlier there had been an agreement to free "some" of the hostages, but other officials would not confirm this.

Two of the 23 South Korean aid workers abducted by the Taliban on July 19 have been killed. Sixteen women are among the 21 remaining hostages.

The kidnappers initially demanded the Afghan government release specific fighters in return for the hostages, a condition the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai has rejected.

The government has been roundly criticized for exchanging five militants for an Italian hostage in March.

U.S. lawyer demands support for Canadian; CBA sympathetic to child soldier, Omar Khadr

IDNUMBER 200708120015

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: William Kuebler;

KEYWORDS: CANADIANS; PRISONERS OF WAR; INTERNATIONAL LAW; TERRORISM

BYLINE: Suzanne Wilton

SOURCE: Calgary Herald

WORD COUNT: 442

An American military lawyer representing a young Canadian terror detainee made an urgent call to action Saturday on the part of Canada's legal community.

Lt.-Cmdr. William Kuebler said the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) must intervene on behalf of Omar Khadr, and pressure the federal government to demand the U.S. release the "child soldier."

"Meaningful action needs to be taken — sooner rather than later," Kuebler said in Calgary Saturday, after pleading his case to lawyers gathered here for a CBA conference.

"At the very least, please engage."

For the last five years, Khadr has been the lone Canadian held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a detention prison set up by the U.S. following its declaration of a "war on terror."

Toronto-born Khadr is accused of killing a U.S. soldier during a firefight in Afghanistan.

He was 15 at the time.

His lawyers — including Kuebler and two Canadian attorneys — argue the U.S. has violated international law and should be treating Khadr as a child soldier.

They called the U.S. tribunal system that was set up after 9/11 a "kangaroo court" that denies Khadr and other detainees due process.

While other nations, such as Australia and the U.K. have demanded the release of foreign nationals held at the modern-day "devil's island" set up in Cuba, the Canadian government, said Kuebler, has remained silent.

Human rights groups have urged Prime Minister Stephen Harper to bring Khadr home, but Foreign Minister Peter MacKay has made clear the government has no plans to protest U.S. plans to put Khadr before a military commission on war crimes.

The CBA last year sent a letter to Harper, urging the government to pressure the U.S. to free detainees without charge or fair trial, but it did not specifically take up Khadr's cause.

After hearing Kuebler speak on Saturday about the case, the national legal lobby group appeared willing to step up the pressure.

Although there is no formal resolution on the issue to be discussed at the CBA's conference, outgoing president Parker MacCarthy said an urgent vote could be held this week.

"It should be a matter of great concern to all Canadians," said MacCarthy.

"I'm persuaded . . . the time has come for all Canadians to speak out," he added.

But time is running out for Khadr. The 20-year-old Canadian could within the next six months face a military tribunal that will surely find him guilty of war crimes, and imprison him for life, his lawyers said.

About six weeks ago, Edmonton lawyer Dennis Edney visited Khadr at the naval base where he's being held. He said the 20-year-old is suffering mentally — he asked for crayons to draw. He is also deteriorating physically, and is going blind.

On his return to Canada, Edney said his rented plane was diverted to Florida. Edney said he was taken off the plane, separated from his two colleagues and interrogated. His computer — containing client files, including Khadr's — was taken to another room.

"I was warned off," said Edney. "The message to me was a chilling effect."

Despite what they might think about Khadr or his "pedigree," Canadians should be concerned about his case and the federal government's unwillingness to step in, said Edney.

"What does this say for other Canadians if they get in trouble?" he asked.

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Taliban ambush injures five soldiers; Canadians hit roadside bomb

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PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
KEYWORDS: CANADIANS; WAR
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 448

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Five Canadian soldiers were injured early today after their supply convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents.

None of the soldiers was critically injured in the blast. They were evacuated to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan, for treatment.

The soldiers, whose names were not released, in line with military policy, were travelling in an RG–31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy that was supplying a Canadian forward operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City.

On their way back to base, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road. They then came under fire from rocket–propelled grenades.

The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb. Officials would not say whether the bomb was remotely detonated or "pressure plated."

All but one of the soldiers were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, commonly known as the Van Doos. However, it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec.

The attack came only hours after a top Canadian military commander touted the progress Canada has made in securing the province against insurgents.

"The security situation has improved immensely over the last year," Lt.–Col. Rob Walker said Saturday as his Royal Canadian Regiment handed over command of Canada's battle group to the Van Doos.

Walker asserted that traffic along the roads around Kandahar City has increased and commerce has picked up.

"The bad news for the Taliban is they have been defeated time and time again on the battlefield. They are having less and less influence on the population of Kandahar province."

The area just west of Kandahar City, along Highway 1, has been a trouble spot for Canadians. A number of Canadian soldiers have died along that stretch of the highway, at one point earning it the nickname "Ambush Alley." Today's attack took place near that area, at the junction of a small side road and Highway 1.

Military officials now frown on any reference to Ambush Alley, saying security along the road has improved significantly in recent months. But this latest attack suggests the nickname might still apply.

The incident could also further erode support for the military mission, which is already low in Quebec. Recent surveys suggest more than two-thirds of Quebecers oppose Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan.

In June, protesters held an anti-war demonstration as soldiers paraded through the streets of Quebec City.

Command of the mission was turned over Aug. 1 to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, of the Van Doos, who has said that the focus of the mission will shift more heavily in favour of efforts to train the Afghan army to take over a greater share of the burden of safeguarding the nation's security.

As the Afghan army develops in effectiveness, fewer NATO troops, including Canadians, would be on the front lines of fighting against Taliban insurgents.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said that Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan will end in February 2009, unless Parliament decides otherwise.

Altogether, 66 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Taliban attack kills NATO member; Roadside ambush injures five Canadians

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PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
KEYWORDS: CANADIANS; WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 449

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – A soldier with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force was killed and five Canadian troops were injured by Taliban insurgents today.

The nationality of the killed soldier was not released. None of the Canadians were critically injured when their supply convoy hit a roadside bomb. They were evacuated to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan, for treatment.

The Canadians, whose names were not released, in line with military policy, were travelling in an RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy that was supplying a Canadian forward operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City.

On their way back to base, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road. They then came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades.

The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb. Officials would not say whether the bomb was remotely detonated or "pressure plated."

An Afghan soldier was also wounded, Agence France–Presse reported.

All but one of the Canadians were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, commonly known as the Van Doos.

However, it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec. The attack came only hours after a top Canadian military commander touted the progress Canada has made in securing the province against insurgents.

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Canucks hurt in Afghan

SOURCETAG 0708120620
PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 21
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 85

Five Canadian soldiers were slightly injured early today when their convoy was attacked by a roadside bomb and rocket-propelled grenades.

Lt.-Cmdr. Hubert Genest says the victims were in an RG31 light-armoured vehicle in a supply convoy when they were ambushed about 13 km west of Kandahar at 1:20 a.m. local time.

They had just supplied the Maisum Ghar base and were about halfway back to the base at Kandahar when they were attacked.

The injured were brought back to the Maisum Ghar camp where they are waiting to be transferred by helicopters to the hospital at the Kandahar base. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL; WORLD

Taliban: We'll free two sick hostages Korean women will be released 'soon,' militant spokesman says

SOURCETAG: 0708120600

PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 8

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Shir Ahmad, Reuters Taliban negotiators speak to media yesterday about 21 South Koreans held hostage since July 19 in Afghanistan.

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 246

A Taliban spokesman said yesterday that two sick female South Korean hostages would be released "soon" for the sake of good relations between the Taliban and South Korea. Neither the international Red Cross or the Afghan government could immediately confirm the claim.

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Two Taliban leaders and four South Korean officials met yesterday for the second day of face-to-face talks over the fate of 21 South Korean hostages being held since July 19 by the militants. The two said the Koreans would "definitely" be released and possibly as soon as "today or tomorrow."

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Mullah Qari Bashir, one of the Taliban negotiators, said the face-to-face talks were going well and that the Taliban were sticking with their original demand — that 21 Taliban prisoners be released from prisons in Afghanistan.

"God willing the government (of Afghanistan) and the government of Korea will accept this," Bashir said outside the Ghazni office of the Afghan Red Cross, which is acting as a neutral intermediary. "Definitely these people will be released. God willing our friends (Taliban militants in prison) will be released."

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Taliban: We'll free two sick hostages Korean women will be released 'soon,' militant spokesman says

SOURCETAG: 0708120449

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 9

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KEYWORDS=WORLD

Taliban: We'll free two sick hostages Korean women will be released 'soon,' militant spokesman says

SOURCETAG: 0708120366
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 16
ILLUSTRATION: photo by Shir Ahmad, Reuters Taliban negotiators speak to media yesterday about 21 South Koreans held hostage since July 19 in Afghanistan.
BYLINE: AP
DATELINE: GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN
WORD COUNT: 246

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KEYWORDS=WORLD

New plane draws raves

SOURCETAG 0708120152

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A7

ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos by Richard Lam, CP 1. Canada's first C-17 Globemaster III taxis at the Abbotsford International Airport yesterday. It was introduced at the city's international airshow before heading to its base at CFB Trenton. 2. Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor gives the thumbs-up while posing for a photo with Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, chief of the air staff, and Josee Verner, minister of international co-operation.

BYLINE: STEPHANIE LEVITZ, CP

DATELINE: ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

WORD COUNT: 222

Turbulence surrounding the acquisition of Canada's newest military aircraft gave way yesterday to clear skies as the massive cargo plane landed on Canadian soil for the first time.

The first of four Boeing C-17s that will eventually be delivered to the Canadian military soared past a mountain backdrop to land at the airport here as the star attraction of the annual airshow.

The arrival of Canada One, as it's called, will allow the military to abandon its need to beg, borrow or lease heavy-lift carriers from other armies or private contractors when responding to domestic or international crises.

"With this aircraft, our Canadian Forces will be able to move critical capabilities to the places they are needed at the time they are needed," Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said in welcoming the plane to Canada.

O'Connor chafed at Opposition criticism the planes aren't necessary and the \$3.4 billion being spent to buy and maintain them should have been used to buy the tactical aircraft so needed on the ground in Afghanistan.

"The opposition always opposes," O'Connor told reporters as he was dwarfed by the 16-metre-high plane.

The four-engine planes can lift 77,500 kilograms of equipment, including battle tanks, and have room for about 100 soldiers.

The second plane should arrive in November, and the final two are slated to join the air force in the spring.

Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, chief of the air staff, said the plane will help Canada assert its military and political sovereignty.

"This gives us two things. It gives us outsize capacity, the ability to carry really big things, and independence of action," he said.

"We get to make the choices of where and when to carry the stuff. It is a very important step for us."

KEYWORDS=CANADA

Taliban: We'll free two sick hostages Korean women will be released 'soon,' militant spokesman says

SOURCETAG: 0708120260

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 30

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Shir Ahmad, Reuters Taliban negotiators speak to media yesterday about 21 South Koreans held hostage since July 19 in Afghanistan.

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 246

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KEYWORDS=WORLD

Hong Kong vets recall nightmare They never gave up hope of returning home one day

SOURCETAG 0708120712
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.12
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SECTION: News
PAGE: 26
BYLINE: PAUL JACKSON
WORD COUNT: 371

The slave labour, the beatings, the starvation and the disease sometimes haunt the likes of Doug Rees, John Dearden and Ralph MacLean to this very day.

But they remember, too, the day American planes suddenly flew over their Japanese prison camps, dropping food supplies, and with that the knowledge the war was over.

All three Calgarians spent almost four years in captivity.

On Dec. 8, 1941, just a few hours after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, they also attacked the British Crown colony of Hong Kong.

Everyone remembers Pearl Harbor, but few recall the attack on Hong Kong.

But this week, the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association holds its national convention at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Calgary, and the halls will be full of reminiscences.

From Wednesday to Sunday there'll be meetings, speeches, and displays of memorabilia, and a service at the Cenotaph.

In 1941, Canada sent a force of 1,975 soldiers to help defend the British Crown colony of Hong Kong, and after holding out against hopeless odds, the forces surrendered on Christmas day.

Some 290 Canadians were killed in the defence, 493 were wounded, then hell began for the living after they were transferred to prison camps in Japan.

"We ate rice every day. It was full of rat droppings and maggots," says Rees, now 86, then a member of the Royal Rifles.

Just 22, he worked hour after hour in a shipyard.

"I was beaten by the guards constantly. They beat the hell out of me."

Dearden, now 86, then 21, and with the Winnipeg Grenadiers, was forced to work in a hazardous, backbreaking coal mine.

"I look back on those years as the 'long rice march!' Now and again, though, we got a bun, but the buns were full of bugs."

MacLean, also 21 at the time, and now 85, and also with the Royal Rifles, didn't know what to expect after the surrender.

"I'd gone through 17 days on duty without sleep before the surrender and was exhausted."

He was put to work in a steel foundry.

"I worked from before daybreak to after sunset."

All around them, their fellow comrades were dying.

None of the three heard any news about the progress of the war.

Yet none of them ever gave up hope of one day returning to Canada.

MacLean recalls the first indication the war might be over was when several days in a row, the boss at the steel plant told the PoWs: "You no work today."

Then one day he saw a group gathered together, walked up, and saw them talking to two American soldiers.

"I couldn't put into words how I felt. I just went into my barracks, went to my bed, and dropped to my knees in relief."

Dearden says one day all the guards simply disappeared, then he saw American planes overhead, and shortly after that American bombers came over dropping food supplies.

After he returned to Canada, Rees worked for the post office for 35 years. Dearden worked as a salesman in various stores. MacLean worked at Cominco for 40 years.

Says MacLean, "I can't complain. I've had a very good life."

Gail Richoz, regional director of the association, notes the public is welcome to drop by the convention, visit the memorabilia rooms, and attend the Cenotaph service between 11 a.m. to noon this coming Saturday.

"We want to keep public awareness of our Hong Kong veterans and how they suffered alive, and we also want to inspire people to respect the sacrifices our men and women now in uniform and in Afghanistan are making." KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Taliban: We'll free two sick hostages Korean women will be released 'soon,' militant spokesman says

SOURCETAG: 0708120694

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Shir Ahmad, Reuters Taliban negotiators speak to media yesterday about 21 South Koreans held hostage since July 19 in Afghanistan.

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 246

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KEYWORDS=WORLD

Hundreds to honour slain soldiers

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PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 7
BYLINE: DAVE DORMER, SUN MEDIA
WORD COUNT: 206

Hundreds are expected at Peacekeepers Park in Garrison Green today to honour the 181 Canadian soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice and given their lives on peacekeeping operations around the world.

Beginning at noon, the annual service is an important one, said Shael Gelfand, spokesman for the Canadian Association of Veterans of United Nations Peacekeeping — especially with Canadian soldiers currently stationed in international hot-spots, such as war-torn Afghanistan.

"It's more poignant and more relevant than it has ever been because of the sacrifices made in recent years," said Gelfand.

"It's important that all Canadians of all ages understand what our soldiers are doing for us and the sacrifice they're prepared to make."

Several peacekeeping veterans will be on hand during the hour-long ceremony, including Col. Don Ethell (retired), a veteran of 14 peacekeeping tours that included service in Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Central America and the Balkans.

More than 60 Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since the mission started in 2002, but Gelfand said it's important to remember the country's troops serve all over the world.

"I'm not sure exactly how many peacekeeping operations Canadians are involved in today, but I know we are involved in numerous other UN- and NATO-sanctioned operations," he said.

"There are still troops in Haiti and there's troops in the Middle East and Africa."

During today's ceremony, two CF-18 Hornets will conduct a fly-past over Peacekeepers Park, located on Peacekeepers Way off Richard Rd. S.W. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Afghan army still waiting for rifles O'Connor promised

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.12

PAGE: A7

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 335

CP Wire Martin Ouellet KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Toting obsolete equipment and an arsenal dating back to the Soviet era, the Afghan National Army says it's waiting for modern weapons promised by Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor.

The Afghan army, which Canada is counting on to take over fighting against the Taliban in coming months, has yet to receive C-7 assault rifles and ammunition the Canadian government pledged to deliver, said Lt.-Col. Sherinshaw Khobandi.

In Ottawa, a Defence Ministry spokesman confirmed that supplies for the Afghan National Army are planned, but declined to specify a date when they will be delivered.

Khobandi said O'Connor should have replenished the arsenal, at least in part, during his last visit. O'Connor's last public trip to Afghanistan was in March.

"We had a good talk with him," he said through an interpreter during a visit to the Kandahar multinational base on Saturday.

"I suggested that he could help us with some weapons and some ammunition. His recommendation was that within the next few months, he'll supply us with brand-new equipment from (the) Canadian Forces." The C-7 delivery delay has slowed the preparation of Afghan recruits and stalled their takeover of combat operations against the Taliban.

For now, Afghan soldiers must rely on Soviet-era weapons such as the Kalashnikov AK-47.

At best, the AK-47s are not as precise and have a shorter range than the C-7, which is the Canadian version of the American M-16.

Khobandi is waiting for the weapons with impatience.

"I'm hoping and waiting for that day (to) come," he said, "so that we can work together with the Canadian Forces, with their new equipment, and then we'll be trained with the new Canadian equipment for future operations." In the meantime, the Afghan military has a lot of work to do before it can match the firepower and challenge insurgents in place of Canadian troops.

In Kandahar province, fewer than 500 men are sufficiently trained and ready for combat.

Canada's new tactical group commander in Kandahar province, Lt.-Col.

Alain Gauthier, remains optimistic.

Gauthier said Afghan soldiers will have sufficient numbers and will be adequately trained to secure districts around Kandahar City.

"This will permit us (the Canadian military) to enlarge our field of action farther into the province," said Gauthier, who replaced Lt.-Col. Rob Walker.

— Canadian Press

Close to home Set of TV's Brothers & Sisters strives to bring a realistic touch to the travails of the troubled Walker clan

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.12

PAGE: D1

SECTION: TV – Articles

WORD COUNT: 1111

Brad Oswald Brad Oswald – Watching TV BURBANK — It's a steamy summer afternoon in southern California, and a cluster of TV critics is happily gathered in the coolest kitchen on prime-time television.

It's not just the mercifully adjusted thermostat that makes this place cool; it's also the fact that this extremely well-appointed, almost fully functional but entirely make-believe cooking and gathering space is the hub of the chaotic goings-on that confound the fictional Walker clan of the ABC drama Brothers & Sisters.

By whatever standard you choose to apply — real-world practicality, movie-magic imagery or design-magazine allure — Nora Walker's kitchen is a show-stopper.

"This is probably the room we get the most mail about, and the most comments, because it's the dream kitchen," says production designer Denny Dugally, who's leading a small gaggle of professional TV-watchers on a tour of Brothers & Sisters' tightly packed collection of home and office sets in stages 6 and 7 of Walt Disney Studios' Burbank lot. "Whether you're a cook or not, you want to cook in this kitchen." It's true. Unlike many TV-show soundstages, which employ a mix of actual items with well-crafted fakery to create a convincing onscreen look, the Brothers & Sisters kitchen is pretty darned close to the real thing. The floor is real hardwood, not just a clever paint job; the cabinetry and tilework are authentic; and even the kitchen sink and four-burner gas range can be made to function if a scene demands it.

"I tend to like to use real stuff wherever I can — especially here," Dugally says, pointing to the ceramic tiles behind the stove.

"If you've got heat on here, the last thing you'd want is fibreglass tile in behind it. In reality, it's always better for us to use the real stuff whenever we can.

"Pretty much everything you see is real... We've had design magazines get in touch with the set decorator and myself to ask where we got certain items." There's no question, adds Dugally, that the attention to detail employed in constructing the sets makes it easier for the show's stellar ensemble cast — led by Sally Field, Calista Flockhart and Rachel Griffiths — to bring Brothers & Sisters' scripts to life.

The series, which suffered a bit of a rocky start last fall after last-minute cast changes and rewriting made many observers think the show was in trouble, improved steadily throughout the 2006–07 season and finished as one of TV's best new dramas.

Brothers & Sisters follows the personal and professional travails of the multi-generational Walker clan, owners of a small-scale fruit-and-vegetable empire known as Ojai Foods. In last fall's series premiere, family patriarch William Walker (Tom Skerritt) died suddenly, leaving the business on the brink of financial ruin and forcing his fractured family to reconnect in order to save the troubled enterprise.

The firm's management fell to siblings Sarah and Tommy (Griffiths and Balthazar Getty), who discovered financial irregularities amounting to millions of dollars. Meanwhile, sister Kitty (Calista Flockhart), a conservative talk-radio host, moved home from the East Coast to rejoin the family while trying her hand at TV.

Brother Kevin (Matthew Rhys) was trying to balance a left-leaning legal career with a somewhat conflicted gay lifestyle, and youngest sibling Justin (Dave Annable), still reeling after a tour of duty in Afghanistan, continued to struggle with the post-traumatic demons that drove him to drug abuse. And all of this took place under the watchful but overstressed eye of matriarch Nora (Field), who was determined to keep the family intact even if she couldn't keep her own (stuff) together.

At the outset, *Brothers & Sisters* was deadly serious drama, so wrenching at times that it was almost hard to watch. Its uncertain start and early cast changes (Field was a late addition, replacing original mom Betty Buckley) were followed by a behind-the-scenes shuffle that saw executive producer Marti Noxon (*Prison Break*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Private Practice*) let go and new producer Greg Berlanti (*Everwood*, *Jack & Bobby*, *Dawson's Creek*) brought in to replace her.

As a result, the show's storylines became slightly less weighty, and its viewership started to grow.

"I think the addition of Greg Berlanti was huge, because he came in and introduced an element of humour that gave the show a good balance," says Annable, one of several cast members on hand to chat with TV critics during this July-afternoon set visit. "I think that's what helps to move the hour along — you get to laugh with these people and cry with these people, instead of just curling up into the fetal position and weeping after each episode." *Brothers & Sisters*' first season garnered three Emmy nominations — best lead actress (Field), best supporting actress (Griffiths) and best casting for a drama series.

The second-season premiere, which airs Sept. 30 (on ABC and Global), is bound to be a frenzied affair, given all the twists, turns and emotion-packed cliffhangers in last May's finale. Kitty, now communications director for presidentially inclined U.S. Senator Robert McCallister (Rob Lowe), has said yes to her boss's marriage proposal; Tommy has launched a winery business with his father's former mistress, Holly (Patricia Wettig); Justin's army unit has been called up for a tour in Iraq; and Sarah's marriage is on the brink of imploding after she learned husband Joe (John Pyper-Ferguson) made a pass at Holly's daughter (and the Walker children's half-sister), Rebecca (Emily VanCamp).

"When I looked at the script, I just knew it was hugely emotional," Field recalls of the difficult season-finale shoot. "And when you're already that tired, you just buckle your seatbelt and hang on, because it's going to be 10 days of really gruelling work."

"It's always hard. Emotion is really, really hard; it isn't fun in any way." That may be true for the actors; what made *Brothers & Sisters* a rookie-season winner was the fact it provided its viewers with almost equal doses of raw emotion and dysfunctional-family fun.

"I think we knew we had something good from the beginning, and that there was a lot of unwarranted bad press early on about cast changes and all that," says Annable. "The only thing we were trying to do is come up with the best product. ... I think we found our stride, and hopefully we'll be able to continue that momentum in Season 2." A momentum that started, and will likely continue, in the coolest kitchen on TV.

Canada One lands on home turf First of four new military aircraft arrives from U.S.

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.12

PAGE: A7

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 618

CP Wire Stephanie Levitz ABBOTSFORD, B.C. — The turbulence surrounding the acquisition of Canada's newest military aircraft gave way on Saturday to clear skies for the official landing of the massive cargo plane in Canada for the first time.

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The arrival of Canada One, as it is being called, will allow the military to abandon its need to beg, borrow or lease heavy-lift carriers from other armies or private contractors when responding to domestic or international crises.

"With this aircraft, our Canadian Forces will be able to move critical capabilities to the places they are needed at the time they are needed," Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said.

He chafed at opposition criticism that the planes aren't necessary and the \$3.4 billion being spent to buy and maintain them should have been used instead to purchase tactical aircraft that are desperately needed in Afghanistan.

"The opposition always opposes," O'Connor told reporters as he was dwarfed by the 16-metre-high plane on the tarmac.

"If I gave out gold bars, they'd say it wouldn't be enough. This aircraft is absolutely needed by the air force." The four-engine planes can lift 77,500 kilograms of equipment, including tanks, and have room for about 100 soldiers.

The second plane is anticipated to arrive in November, and the final two should join the air force next spring.

Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, chief of the air staff, said the plane will help Canada assert its military and political sovereignty.

"It gives us outsize capacity, the ability to carry really big things and independence of action," he said.

"We get to make the choices of where and when to carry the stuff.

It is a very important step for us." Both Watt and O'Connor rebuffed a report earlier this week that the high cost of the C-17s would require budget cuts for fuel supplies and maintenance for other aircraft.

"That is not true," O'Connor said. "The national procurement budget is going up, not down." The purchase of the strategic airlift was announced last February as one of O'Connor's first moves as defence minister; their arrival may be his last with rumours circulating in Ottawa that Prime Minister Stephen Harper will shuffle his cabinet Monday.

Maj. Jeremy Reynolds, who flew Canada One on its inaugural flight from the factory in California, said it was a dream to fly.

"It's the most modern technology you can think of," he said.

The Defence Department reinstated a squadron at Canadian Forces Base Trenton, in Ontario, to fly and do the at-home maintenance for the planes.

Thirty-two pilots, 24 loadmasters, 10 maintenance management staff and 96 technicians were selected.

Among the soldiers who will most feel the effects of having the new planes are members of Canada's Disaster Assistance Response Team. Loads that took 24 flights in a Hercules to deploy to the tsunami disaster zone in southeast Asia in 2004 will now take just one trip.

"It's going to be very fast and very efficient," said Leading Seaman Jean-Francois Grenier, who travelled with DART three years ago.

Controversy had erupted when the contract for the planes was awarded to Boeing because the deal was fast-tracked through the normal competitive bidding process.

Small contractors also said the government's failure to buy the rights associated with maintaining the aircraft would damage the Canadian industry.

The military is burdened by unexpected expenses because of the acquisition of the planes.

New extra-large hangars will be constructed at Trenton and special-cargo handling equipment needed to be purchased.

The deal was part of a larger \$13 billion announcement by the Conservatives to add dozens of aircraft to the military, including medium-lift Hercules, and CH-47 Chinook battlefield transport helicopters.

Boeing will also be supplying the Chinooks and Lockheed Martin will supply the Hercules. The military has been agitating for years for the government to start replacing and adding to Canada's military fleet, saying the current group of aircraft are rapidly aging.

The growing threat posed by improvised explosive devices planted along road supply routes has also prompted calls for Canada to switch to air-drop resupply missions, but the military lacks the equipment to do so.

— Canadian Press

Five Canadian soldiers hurt in ambush

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.12

PAGE: A7

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 534

CP Wire Andrew Mayeda KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Five Canadian soldiers were injured early today after their supply convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents.

None of the soldiers was critically injured in the blast. They were evacuated to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan, for treatment.

The soldiers, whose names were not released, in line with military policy, were travelling in an RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy that was supplying a Canadian forward operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City.

On their way back to base, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road. The convoy then came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades.

Military officials would not say whether the IED was remotely detonated or "pressure plated." The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb.

All but one of the soldiers were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, commonly known as the Van Doos.

However, it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec.

The attack came only hours after a top Canadian military commander touted the progress Canada has made in securing the province against insurgents.

"The security situation has improved immensely over the last year," Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said Saturday as his Royal Canadian Regiment handed over command of Canada's battle group to the Van Doos.

Walker asserted that traffic along the roads around Kandahar City has increased and commerce has picked up.

"The bad news for the Taliban is they have been defeated time and time again on the battlefield. They are having less and less influence on the population of Kandahar province." The area just west of Kandahar City, along Highway 1, has been a trouble spot for Canadians. A number of Canadian soldiers have died along that stretch of the highway, at one point earning it the nickname "Ambush Alley." Today's attack took place near that area, at the junction of a small side road and Highway 1.

Military officials now frown on any reference to Ambush Alley, saying security along the road has improved significantly in recent months. But this latest attack suggests the nickname might still apply.

The incident could also further erode support for the military mission, which is already low in Quebec. Recent surveys suggest more than two-thirds of Quebecers oppose Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan. In June, protesters held an anti-war demonstration as soldiers paraded through the streets of Quebec City.

Command of the mission was turned over Aug. 1 to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, of the Van Doos, who has said that the focus of the mission will shift more heavily in favour of efforts to train the Afghan army to take over a greater share of the burden of safeguarding the nation's security. As the Afghan army develops in effectiveness, fewer NATO troops, including Canadians, would be on the front lines of fighting against Taliban insurgents.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said that Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan will end in February 2009, unless Parliament decides otherwise.

Altogether, 66 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002. Most recently, on July 4, six soldiers and an Afghan interpreter were killed when their RG-31 armoured vehicle struck an IED approximately 20 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City. Those deaths came just two weeks after three other soldiers were killed by another roadside bomb.

— CanWest News Service

Five Canadian troops injured in Afghanistan; Supply convoy ambushed

IDNUMBER 200708120040
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen; With files from Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 223

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Five Canadian soldiers were injured early yesterday after their supply convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents.

The soldiers were travelling in an RG–31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy that was supplying a Canadian forward–operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City. On their way back from Masum Ghar, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road. The convoy then came under fire from rocket–propelled grenades.

None of the soldiers was critically injured in the blast. They were medivvaced to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan.

In line with military policy, their names were not released. All but one of the soldiers were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, also known as the Van Doos. But it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec. Military officials could not say if the IED was remotely detonated or "pressure plated." The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb.

Meanwhile, a soldier with the NATO–led International Security Assistance Force was killed and two were wounded yesterday when their vehicle struck a bomb in eastern Afghanistan, the force said, not giving the nationalities of the casualties. The force did not say in which province the incident occurred.

Five Canadian soldiers injured in Afghanistan; Convoy ambushed by Taliban insurgents

IDNUMBER 200708120039
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 247

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Five Canadian soldiers were injured early today after their supply convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents.

None of the soldiers was critically injured in the blast. They were evacuated to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan, for treatment. The soldiers, whose names were not released in line with military policy, were travelling in an RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy supplying a Canadian forward operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City. On their way back to base, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road. The convoy then came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades. Military officials would not say whether the IED was remotely detonated or "pressure plated." The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb. All but one of the soldiers were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, commonly known as the Van Doos. But it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec.

The attack came hours after a top Canadian military commander touted the progress Canada has made in securing the province against insurgents. "The security situation has improved immensely over the last year," Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said yesterday as his Royal Canadian Regiment handed over command of Canada's battle group to the Van Doos.

Lawyer calls for Khadr's return home

IDNUMBER 200708120025
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
DATELINE: CALGARY
BYLINE: Janice Tibbetts
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 356

CALGARY – It's time for Canada's lawyers to break their silence on al-Qaeda terrorism suspect Omar Khadr and to lobby the federal government to bring the 20-year-old Canadian home, his U.S. military lawyer, Lt.-Cmdr. William Kuebler, said yesterday.

"Enough is enough," Lt.-Cmdr. Kuebler told a gathering of the Canadian Bar Association. "It's time for this group to call for Omar to be returned."

Canada is the only western country that has given the U.S. the benefit of the doubt in its treatment of "enemy combatants" being held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Lt.-Cmdr. Kuebler said. Mr. Khadr has been detained without trial for five years at the U.S. military base.

The Canadian government has refused to comment on the matter, other than to say Mr. Khadr faces serious charges.

Mr. Khadr will be among the first Guantanamo detainees to face trial under new military commissions established this year. That after a U.S. Supreme Court decision in July 2006 found earlier trial procedures violated international law.

U.S. military prosecutors allege that Mr. Khadr, then 15, threw a grenade that killed U.S. army Sgt. Christopher Speer during a battle between U.S. troops and al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan in the summer of 2002.

Lt.-Cmdr. Kuebler said he is baffled that the Canadian government has failed to take up the cause of Mr. Khadr, who he said remains child-like and asked him for crayons and paper during a recent visit.

Canada, while outspoken internationally about the abuse of child soldiers, has failed one of its own citizens, he said.

Lorne Waldman, a Canadian lawyer who has worked for terror suspects, said he believes that the Canadian legal community's complacency is based, in part, on what he referred to as the "Khadr effect."

The young man is a member of a self-described al-Qaeda family that is notorious in Canada.

"The Khadr case is a difficult one," Mr. Waldman said. "But the Khadr case isn't about an individual, it's about more than that. It's about a system that is fundamentally unfair."

Among other things, international law dictates that the legal system must deal with children and adults differently, which the U.S. has refused to do with its Guantanamo detainees, Mr. Waldman said. "Canada constantly condemns the use of child soldiers so why do we have a double standard?" he asked.

"When a Canadian is detained as a child soldier, we turn our back on him."

Taliban claim two S. Korean hostages freed; Officials can't confirm women's release

IDNUMBER 200708120023
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Mohammad Yaqob
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 452

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – Afghanistan's hardline Taliban said yesterday it had freed two female South Korean hostages captured more than three weeks ago, but officials could not immediately confirm the claim.

Two spokesmen for the insurgents said both women were ill and had been freed unconditionally as a "gesture of goodwill," just hours after the conclusion of face-to-face talks between the Taliban and a South Korean delegation.

Neither Afghan nor South Korean officials would confirm any hostages had been released. The women had not been handed over to authorities by late yesterday, a western official close to the process said.

"Our leadership council decided to free unconditionally and as a gesture of goodwill two women hostages who are sick," said the main Taliban spokesman, Yousuf Ahmadi.

Mr. Ahmadi said they might not yet have arrived at the point where they would be handed over to authorities "due to some transportation difficulty."

"But what I can tell you is the leadership council has said they must be freed, so they're freed," he said.

The Taliban abducted 23 South Korean aid workers in volatile southern Ghazni province on July 19. Two male hostages have been shot dead, and the insurgents have threatened to kill more if their demands are not met.

Representatives of the hardline movement and the South Koreans met in the town of Ghazni earlier yesterday for a second round of direct negotiations over the release of the hostages — seen as one of the last hopes for the captives.

The Taliban has repeatedly demanded the release of jailed militants in exchange for the hostages, a condition the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai has rejected.

Another Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahed, separately confirmed the release of the two women.

"Two of the female hostages have been freed as a gesture of goodwill and also to show that we're honest in our talks and expect the government to be honest and free our prisoners," he said.

The police chief of Ghazni, Alishah Ahmadzai, said earlier there had been an agreement to free "some" of the hostages, but other officials would not confirm this.

The two Taliban representatives who met the South Korean team said yesterday they were "optimistic," but reiterated their demand for a prisoner swap.

"The hostages will be freed if the government accepts our demands to free some prisoners," one of the negotiators, Qari Bashir, said outside the offices of the Afghan Red Crescent Society in Ghazni, where the talks were held. "If they accept our demands, maybe they'll be freed today or tomorrow," he said at what amounted to the Taliban's first press conference in several years.

The Taliban, who have been waging an insurgency since being toppled from government in 2001, usually speak to reporters through spokesmen who make telephone contact from undisclosed locations.

The 23 South Korean aid workers were abducted while travelling on a highway linking the capital Kabul and the southern city of Kandahar, which many foreigners consider a no-go area because of a general decline in security.

Taliban flip flop over hostages release; Officials had claimed two would be freed

IDNUMBER 200708120022
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
DATELINE: SEOUL
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 444

SEOUL – Afghanistan's Taliban has decided not to free any of 21 South Korean hostages despite earlier saying two women could go, the Korea's Yonhap news agency reported today citing an insurgents' spokesman.

Yonhap quoted Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi as saying: "Our leaders have changed their minds and decided not to free two female hostages."

Mr. Ahmadi had told AFP late yesterday that two female hostages, who were sick, were being released unconditionally as a "gesture of goodwill."

The announcement had been made just hours after the conclusion of face-to-face talks between the Taliban and a South Korean delegation.

At the time, neither Afghan nor South Korean officials could confirm any hostages had been released.

"Our leadership council decided to free unconditionally and as a gesture of goodwill two women hostages who are sick," Mr. Ahmadi, the main Taliban spokesman, had said.

However, Mr. Ahmadi said at the time that there was "some transportation difficulty."

"But what I can tell you is the leadership council has said they must be freed, so they're freed," he said.

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Earlier yesterday, another Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahed, separately confirmed the two women were released.

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The perils of a friendly democracy; U.S. might find pakistan prickly, but Pakistan finds it's not easy to deal with a vigorous democracy

IDNUMBER 200708120035

PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette

DATE: 2007.08.12

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Insight

PAGE: A10

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: REUTERS FILE / Uneasy allies in the war on terror: U.S. President George W. Bush (right) and Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf during a joint news conference in Washington last year. ; Colour Photo: GAZETTE FILE / Former Pakistani president Zia ul-Haq had a warning about dealing with the U.S. ;

KEYWORDS: WAR; IRAQ; ARMED FORCES; UNITED STATES

DATeline: ISLAMABAD

BYLINE: SIMON CAMERON-MOORE

SOURCE: Reuters

WORD COUNT: 721

Around a quarter-century ago, a Pakistani military dictator told a CIA director the pros and cons of hitching his wagon to a superpower governed by democracy.

"The soil is wonderfully fertile, but every four or eight years the river changes course and you may find yourself alone in a desert," President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq told William Casey, according to a biographer of Washington's 1980s spymaster.

Having received an estimated \$10 billion of support since becoming a U.S. ally six years ago, an embattled President Pervez Musharraf must harbour similar fears as the United States builds up to the uncertainties of next year's presidential election.

General Musharraf, who came to power in a 1999 coup, faces major problems securing a second term as president, with political allies wavering, approval ratings slumping and a supreme court that might uphold constitutional challenges.

The extent of Musharraf's difficulties were displayed this week by leaks from within his government that the president was on the brink of invoking emergency powers.

That Musharraf let it be known he wasn't going down the authoritarian route just hours after getting a phone call from U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice fuelled speculation U.S. disapproval and desire to see free and fair elections in Pakistan later this year had played a part in the flip-flop.

Musharraf can ill-afford any loss of backing from Washington as he struggles through the weakest period in an eight-year rule over his nuclear-armed, turbulent Muslim nation.

Pakistan is smarting from a series of diplomatic slights, and calling Musharraf an "indispensable" ally, as U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns did last weekend, can't bail him out if deeds

The perils of a friendly democracy; U.S. might find pakistan prickly, but Pakistan finds it's not easy to deal with

don't match words.

"The Americans have a proclivity for short memories and shifting alliances," remarked Senator Mushahid Hussain, chairman of the Senate's foreign affairs committee.

A week ago, President George W. Bush signed into law a bill requiring him to confirm Pakistan's progress in fighting the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida before releasing future funding.

It disturbed the Pakistani establishment's psyche by evoking memories of the Pressler Amendment, a law that blocked aid and arms sales to Pakistan in 1989, a year after the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan and Zia's death in a mysterious air crash.

Tariq Fatemi, a former Pakistani ambassador to the United States, says many Pakistanis see the alliance as an endless saga of U.S. demands and criticism, and wonder whether it's worth it.

"There is growing skepticism in Pakistan regarding the long-term objectives of the war on terror," he told the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington on Thursday.

To add to Pakistan's chagrin, the U.S. is expected to sign a treaty this month to provide rival India with support for its civil nuclear program.

Senator Hussain said almost all Pakistanis perceived U.S. policies to be going against Pakistan's interests.

"It is being bashed up by the United States because of the failures of its own making in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and the Muslim world as a whole," Hussain said.

Now, Musharraf is again under pressure to strike at Al-Qa'ida nests in hostile tribal lands on the Afghan border.

He has good reasons to comply. Al-Qa'ida wants him dead.

Over 200 Pakistanis, mostly members of the security forces, have been killed in bomb attacks, including multiple suicide attacks, and clashes with militants since early July.

And at least 102 people were killed when commandos stormed the Red Mosque in Islamabad to put down a Taliban-style movement.

The trouble is, the army's casualties are again rising, and it is once again being brought into conflict with its own people.

Pakistani impatience with U.S. intrusiveness also surfaced during the confusion over whether Musharraf would declare an emergency, as Deputy Information Minister Tariq Azim Khan cited "internal and external threats."

The latter was a reference to comments from U.S. politicians that the United States could strike inside Pakistan if it had actionable intelligence on high value Al-Qa'ida targets.

A White House official began the spat, but Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama stirred the issue, saying he would be willing to order attacks even without Pakistani consent.

Part of the reason some U.S. politicians are picking on Pakistan, analysts say, is that is where they believe the war on Islamic extremists should be fought, rather than in Iraq.

The perils of a friendly democracy; U.S. might find Pakistan prickly, but Pakistan finds it's not easy to deal with.

Critical Western media and Washington think tanks have long sown doubts over Pakistan because of its failure to throttle the Taliban, capture Osama bin Laden, or close down mosques and religious schools that run armed militias.

But Pakistan has deployed 90,000 soldiers near the Afghan border, it has lost more than 800 troops, captured hundreds of Al-Qa'ida fighters, and broken plots like one a year ago to blow up airliners over U.S. cities using liquid explosives.

Needing an ally that has to cope with strong anti-American sentiment could undermine the war against terrorism in both countries.

"If Pakistan becomes an election issue in the U.S. election, they shouldn't forget that the United States can become an election issue in Pakistan," warned Senator Hussain.

The perils of a friendly democracy; U.S. might find Pakistan prickly, but Pakistan finds it's not easy to deal with

Two hostages freed: Taliban; Leaders order sick Korean women released but they haven't been handed over yet

IDNUMBER 200708120023
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: HAN JAE-HO, REUTERS / Students hang yellow ribbons for the safe return of the 21 kidnapped South Korean hostages at an event in Seoul yesterday. ;
KEYWORDS: WAR; HOSTAGES; TERRORISM; CRIME; AFGHANISTAN
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
BYLINE: MOHAMMAD YAQOB
SOURCE: AFP
WORD COUNT: 470

Afghanistan's Taliban said yesterday it had freed two female South Korean hostages captured more than three weeks ago, but officials could not immediately confirm the claim.

Two spokespersons for the insurgents said both women were ill and had been freed unconditionally as a "gesture of goodwill," just hours after the conclusion of face-to-face talks between the Taliban and a South Korean delegation.

Neither Afghan nor South Korean officials would confirm any hostages had been released. The women had not been handed over to authorities by late yesterday, a Western official close to the process said.

"Our leadership council decided to free unconditionally and as a gesture of goodwill two women hostages who are sick," said the main Taliban spokesperson, Yousuf Ahmadi.

Ahmadi said they might not yet have arrived at the point where they would be handed over to authorities "due to some transportation difficulty."

"But what I can tell you is the leadership council has said they must be freed, so they're freed," he said.

The Taliban abducted 23 South Korean aid workers in volatile southern Ghazni province on July 19. Two male hostages have been shot dead and the insurgents have threatened to kill more if their demands are not met.

Representatives of the hardline movement and the South Koreans met in the town of Ghazni earlier yesterday for a second round of direct negotiations over the release of the hostages – seen as one of the last hopes for the captives.

The Taliban has repeatedly demanded the release of jailed militants in exchange for the hostages, a condition the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai has rejected.

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Another Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahed, separately confirmed the release of the two women.

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"If they accept our demands, maybe they'll be freed today or tomorrow," he said at what amounted to the Taliban's first press conference in several years.

The 23 South Korean aid workers were abducted while travelling on a key highway linking the capital, Kabul, and the southern city of Kandahar, which many foreigners consider a no-go area because of a general decline in security.

The Taliban are also linked to a militant group holding a German engineer and four Afghans captured in Wardak province near Kabul the day before the abduction of the South Koreans.

The group has demanded a prisoner exchange for the 62-year-old engineer, who was captured with another German who was shot dead days later.

The Taliban were in government from 1996 to 2001, when they were driven out by a U.S.-led coalition.

Two hostages freed: Taliban; Leaders order sick Korean women released but they haven't been handed over

Five soldiers injured in Taliban ambush; Supply convoy comes under fire. Troops headed back to base were part of battle group led by Quebec's Van Doos

IDNUMBER: 200708120018
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.08.12
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
KEYWORDS: CANADIANS; WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: ANDREW MAYEDA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 404

Five Canadian soldiers were injured early today after their supply convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents.

None of the soldiers was critically injured in the blast. They were sent to Kandahar Airfield, NATO's military base in southern Afghanistan, for treatment.

The soldiers, whose names were not made public, in line with military policy, were travelling in an RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle as part of a convoy supplying a Canadian forward operating base in Masum Ghar, southwest of Kandahar City.

On their way back to base, the vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device planted along the road. The convoy then came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades.

Military officials would not say whether the IED was remotely detonated or "pressure plated." The military is still investigating the nature of the bomb.

All but one of the soldiers were part of the battle group led by Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, commonly known as the Van Doos. However, it was not immediately clear if the soldiers are based in Quebec.

The attack came only hours after a top Canadian military commander touted the progress Canada has made in securing the province against insurgents.

"The security situation has improved immensely over the last year," Lt.-Col. Rob Walker said yesterday as his Royal Canadian Regiment handed over command of Canada's battle group to the Van Doos.

Walker asserted that traffic along the roads around Kandahar City has increased and commerce has picked up.

"The bad news for the Taliban is they have been defeated time and time again on the battlefield. They are having less and less influence on the population of Kandahar province."

Five soldiers injured in Taliban ambush; Supply convoy comes under fire. Troops headed back to base were

The area just west of Kandahar City, along Highway 1, has been a trouble spot for Canadians. A number of Canadian soldiers have died along that stretch of the highway, at one point earning it the nickname "Ambush Alley." Today's attack took place near that area, at the junction of a small side road and Highway 1.

Military officials now frown on any reference to Ambush Alley, saying security along the road has improved significantly in recent months. But this latest attack suggests the nickname might still apply.

The incident could also further erode support for the military mission, which is already low in Quebec. Recent surveys suggest more than two-thirds of Quebecers oppose Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan.

Command of the mission was turned over Aug. 1 to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, of the Van Doos, who has said the focus of the mission will shift more heavily in favour of efforts to train the Afghan army to take over a greater share of the burden of safeguarding the nation's security. As the Afghan army develops in effectiveness, fewer

NATO troops, including Canadians, would be on the front lines of fighting against Taliban insurgents.

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