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Taliban set new deadline; Afghan elders continue to negotiate for release of 22 South Korean hostages

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS / A South Korean protester in Seoul, South Korea, participates in a rally yesterday demanding the safe return of South Koreans kidnapped in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of South Korean troops stationed in the country. The Korean sign reads, "Safe return of South Koreans kidnapped in Afghanistan, Withdrawal of South Korean troops." ;

DATELINE: KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

SOURCE: Associated Press

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 485

Afghan clerics and tribal elders are negotiating for the release of 22 South Korean hostages, who a Taliban spokesperson said yesterday have been split into small groups and are being fed bread, yogurt and rice a week after their capture.

A local police chief said the talks have been difficult because the Taliban's demands were unclear.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. "They have got problems among themselves."

The Taliban reiterated their demand that jailed militants be freed in exchange for the captives, and set the latest of several deadlines — midday today — for the condition to be met or more hostages would be killed.

One of the original group of 23 abducted Koreans, a 42-year-old pastor, was found slain with multiple gunshots Wednesday. Authorities recovered the body of Bae Hyung-kyu in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province, where the South Koreans were seized on July 19.

Bae, a founder of the Saemmul Presbyterian Church, led its volunteer work in Afghanistan and was killed on his birthday, South Korean church officials said. An official at the South Korean Embassy in Kabul said authorities were arranging to repatriate the body.

His mother, Lee Chang-suk, 68, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

At the church, about 1,000 people gathered yesterday evening to mourn Bae and pray for the other captives, many crying and consoling each other.

Relatives of other abductees, meanwhile, appealed anew for their relatives' release.

Taliban set new deadline; Afghan elders continue to negotiate for release of 22 South Korean hostages

"We hope the negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban go well," said Kim Kyung-ja, mother of hostage Lee Sun-young. "Please send our lovely children home."

Cha Sung-min, 31, whose 32-year-old sister Cha Hye-jin was being held, said the families were struggling.

"After hearing the sad news, yesterday was a very difficult day," Cha said. "We believe the best way right now is to trust our government."

South Korean presidential spokesperson Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans still believed to be held were not suffering health problems. He said South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had spoken with Afghan President Hamid Karzai about the situation.

But one of the hostages, who identified herself as Yo Syun Ju, told an Afghan journalist by telephone that all the hostages were sick, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported. She pleaded for help to secure their release.

"Tell them to do something to get us released," she said in an interview in the presence of the Taliban militants holding her captive.

Yo, who said she was from Seoul, described her situation as "dangerous."

"Day by day it is getting very difficult," she said in the interview obtained by the BBC. "We are all sick and we have a lot of problems."

Local tribal elders and religious clerics who have respect among the people of Qarabagh district, where the Taliban kidnapped the South Koreans, have been conducting negotiations with the captors for several days.

The negotiations have been held over the telephone, said Ghazni police chief Ali Shah Ahmadzai.

"We will not use force against the militants to free the hostages," Ahmadzai said. "The best way in this case is dialogue."

NATO quiet on soldier's death

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DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: ALLAN WOODS
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 364

An air of secrecy unusual even for NATO's Afghanistan mission surrounds the death of a lone soldier in the country's violent south.

The soldier was among six peacekeepers killed Monday, but only five were claimed by their countries.

For more than four days, the sixth soldier's sacrifice in southern Afghanistan, where Canada's troops are located, has gone unheralded. No name has emerged, no grieving family has stepped forward and no country has claimed the dead soldier as its own.

"I think that one has been slow," said Maj. John Thomas, a spokesperson with the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul. He did confirm that the soldier was a member of the NATO mission, rather than the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We can't say anything until (the identity) has been released," he said, adding that that is the job of a soldier's government.

Meanwhile, concerns linger in Canada that another of the country's soldiers may have been killed, and the death toll may have jumped to 67.

Veteran Canadian military observers said the delay, or absence, of information surrounding the death is suspicious.

"That's a ridiculous amount of time," said Scott Taylor, a former soldier and publisher of military magazine Esprit de Corps. "I thought that for sure, by now, they would have identified (the soldier)," Taylor said from his Ottawa offices. "It's very strange."

As Canadian deaths have mounted in the last year, reports of NATO soldiers killed in southern Afghanistan have become the code word for Canadian soldiers killed in Kandahar province, the spiritual home of the Taliban.

In those situations, the military closes the base at Kandahar Airfield to incoming or outgoing communications while they secure the scene of the incident and inform the families of dead soldiers.

An official notification for the media and the public is followed by a formal ramp ceremony as caskets are loaded on to a Hercules plane to begin the long journey back to Canada.

Sarah Cavanagh, a spokesperson with the Department of National Defence, said the only reason for withholding a dead Canadian's identity is if there are problems contacting that soldier's family.

"We try to avoid creating a state of panic and therefore contact the next of kin, and from that point we indicate that there were fallen soldiers," she said, adding that she could provide no information about the sixth soldier.

The Canadian military has been among the most secretive of the NATO allies with information about dead soldiers — particularly its top-secret special-forces squad, JTF2.

Air force chief calls for new search and rescue aircraft

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EDITION: Final
SECTION: Front
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DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 98

The new commander of Canada's air force says proposals to replace the country's aging fleet of search and rescue aircraft will soon be put before the government.

The Conservatives have already spent nearly \$13 billion on other new aircraft seen as essential for the war in Afghanistan. But Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, who took over air force command yesterday, said replacing fixed-wing search and rescue planes is a priority.

The former Liberal government proposed to replace the aircraft, some of which are over 40 years old, with 15 brand new planes, but the \$2.1-billion program has been stalled.

Captive Christians part of wide movement

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS / South Korean protesters lightcandles in Seoul demanding the release of the Christian missionary hostages kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan. ;
BYLINE: SUKI KIM
SOURCE: Washington Post
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 782

The Taliban's abduction of 23 South Korean Christian missionaries in Afghanistan last Thursday has put South Korea's evangelical fervour under a microscope. Despite its long-standing shamanist, Buddhist and Confucian roots, South Korea has about 12,000 missionaries in 173 countries, second only to the United States. Today, almost half of South Korea's population is Christian.

I remember looking through the window of our fifth-floor apartment in Seoul as a child and finding the night sky peppered with bright-red neon crosses. When I moved to America in my teens, the first faces to greet me were those of the Korean American evangelical Christians at John F. Kennedy International Airport, eagerly awaiting new arrivals with Bibles and taped sermons.

The hostages, members of Saemmul Church from Bundang, near Seoul, appear to have been somewhat naive. They were travelling from Kabul to Kandahar on one of the most dangerous routes in Afghanistan. They rode a charter bus often used by foreigners, immediately attracting attention, and they did not alert local police to their presence for fear of being questioned about their identity papers, the bus driver has said.

Photos of some of the missionaries, mostly women in their 20s and 30s, have surfaced on the Internet; they are seen giddily posing in front of the government sign at Seoul's Incheon International Airport warning about the dangers of travel to Afghanistan.

(It's believed the Taliban has killed one of the hostages, while the fate of the remaining 22 is uncertain.)

This is not the first time South Korean missionaries have endangered themselves by entering war zones to gain converts. In April 2004, seven missionaries were kidnapped in Iraq (they were released within hours). In June that year, Kim Sun-il, a 33-year-old translator who had hoped to do missionary work in Iraq, was taken hostage and beheaded. Last summer, more than 1,000 Korean Christians, including many children, entered Kabul for a peace rally, only to be deported. Proselytizing is illegal in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has threatened to kill missionaries; yet South Korean Christians can't seem to take no for an answer.

It is peculiar that a country claiming to pride itself on its 5,000-year-old philosophical traditions has embraced Christianity with such unabashed eagerness. Roman Catholicism on the Korean Peninsula dates to the late 18th century, and the first Protestant missionaries from the United States arrived a century later. Unlike the Philippines, the most Christian country in Asia, South Korea was never colonized by a Christian nation. Many scholars, somewhat unconvincingly, theorize that Koreans turned to Christianity as a way of

fighting for independence from on-and-off conquerors China and Japan, neither of which took to Christianity with similar zeal.

My deeply Confucian grandfather used to scoff at churches as the foreign devil. When my grandmother became ill and asked to be taken to a local minister who was said to have brought medicine from America, he reluctantly accompanied her after carefully wrapping the Bible the minister had given my grandmother with newspaper, lest someone in the neighbourhood see him carrying it. At the door of the church, family members say, he turned his back, letting her limp across the threshold alone.

People such as my grandfather are rapidly dwindling in today's Korea. It is said that South Korean missionaries will go to the ends of the Earth in search of those most unwilling to be converted. As Christianity has taken firmer hold in the past few decades, riding the boom that has turned South Korea into one of the world's leading economies, competition among churches has turned fierce. Deploying missionaries abroad has become one of the quickest ways for a church to broaden its reputation and attract members. The more volatile the area, the holier the mission.

In highly wired South Korea, the debate is heating up online. President Roh Moo-hyun, who is Catholic, issued a statement this week asking bloggers to stop lashing out at the missionaries for bringing the nation to a standstill. His government is being criticized for not adding Afghanistan to its list of no-travel zones earlier.

Some devout Christians are calling the abductees martyrs, evoking the self-glorification of extreme Islamist jihadists.

The head of Saemmul Church has been forced to apologize to the nation for sending ill-prepared congregants on such a mission. Yet no one is questioning why South Korea, once pegged the Land of the Morning Calm for its Confucian virtue, is rapidly reinventing itself as the most evangelical Christian nation in the world.

Suki Kim, a 2006 Guggenheim fellow, is the author of the novel *The Interpreter*.

Absences difficult for military families; Time apart, changed routines take their toll

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PAGE: B6

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Chris Morris

DATELINE: OROMOCTO, N.B.

ILLUSTRATION: The Timon family has one of its clocks set to Afghanistan time at their Oromocto, N.B., home. Dan, a corporal in the 4 Engineering Support Regiment was home on leave from his deployment. Shown are (from left): Jenna, 12, Kim, Dan, Devin, 7, and Katie, 9.
David Smith The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 857

In the homes of two military families in New Brunswick, clocks serve both as timekeepers and imaginary pathways to the daily lives of loved ones in a dangerous and faraway land.

Kim Timon and Tina McKellar keep clocks in their homes near Canadian Forces Base Gagetown set permanently to Afghanistan time so they and their children can visualize what their husband or father might be doing while stationed in Kandahar.

"For the kids especially, it's really neat to have a clock on the wall so they always know what time it is for daddy," says Timon, looking at a wall clock with the word "Afghanistan" printed beneath it.

"They get up in the morning and they say, 'We're just waking up and daddy's day is just ending.' It keeps us all in touch with what he is doing."

Timon's husband, Dan, an Air Force corporal, and McKellar's husband, Dennis, a sapper who drives light-armoured vehicles, have been in Afghanistan since February as Canadian troops try to establish order in the country's volatile southern provinces.

Dan Timon was recently home on leave, but has now returned and will be in Afghanistan until August.

Dennis McKellar will also return in August, along with hundreds of soldiers from CFB Gagetown in southern New Brunswick.

For the families waiting at home, their return can't come soon enough.

"What I miss the most is him just walking through the door and saying, 'Hi, honey, I'm home,' " says McKellar, struggling to contain her 19-month-old daughter, Chloe, on her lap.

"I even miss the pet peeves. Him taking off his boots and socks, even though his feet smell. He hogs the blankets, I miss that. It's the little things. You don't realize how much they mean until they're not there."

Both Timon and McKellar have three children and while their husbands are away, they are single parents trying to cope with the daily grind and the never-ending demands of growing children.

Both have had to learn to juggle the demands of maintaining their homes – the Timons are in the midst of a major renovation – and caring for their children.

Dan Timon says he spends a lot of time in Kandahar worrying about how Kim and the children are surviving in their rambling house on the outskirts of Oromocto.

"Is there really going to be enough money? The house, is the plumbing going to break, will the car breakdown?" says Dan, taking a break from household repairs while home on leave.

"These are the things that go through my head. What are the resources I can call on back home to help Kim?"

In both households, family friends who are in the military have been called to help with the occasional home repair.

But Kim Timon and Tina McKellar pride themselves on being independent and able to handle most emergencies themselves.

It's the little things they miss – like husbands who enjoy reading to their children.

"I miss him most at bedtime," says Kim.

"I am reading stories to two different girls every night and you can only read so much and then it starts to get to you. I get bored and I'm often lonely."

Added to their emotional and physical load is the stress of knowing that their partner is in a war zone.

It is difficult for the families to talk about the dangers.

McKellar just shakes her head and says she won't speak about the deaths. Timon's eyes well with tears as she talks about the dark times at the base when there are losses.

"The last time, I cried for the wives, even now I cry when I think about them," says Timon, a private in the Reserves who dreams of going to Afghanistan herself some day.

"I feel so much for the wives and the mothers, and what they're going to have to go through – the attention they're going to get that they don't want. It's horrible. I know one night the news was on and I heard that a soldier had died. I panicked. I freaked out. 'Oh my gosh, that could be Dan,' I said. I felt that fear even though I knew that if you hear it on the news, it's not your spouse."

McKellar says that of her three children, only 11-year-old Shawn – her oldest child – has a clear understanding of the risks his father is facing.

"I think he's pretty brave," Shawn says. "I know it's pretty tough for him. I just hope he comes home safe. I can't wait."

Timon says some families make plans for the worst, but she refuses to even entertain the idea that Dan may not come back.

"I'm just not going to think that way," she says determinedly.

Both Timon and McKellar say they make frequent use of the Military Family Resource Centre at CFB Gagetown, part of an international network of support centres for the Canadian military.

The facilities, funded nationally but governed locally, provide companionship and comfort for family members struggling with the deployment of a loved one.

"This particular operation in Afghanistan has put a lot of stress on our families, more so than we have seen for a very long time," says Celine Thompson, the director in Ottawa of military family services. "It's testing their mettle as well as the mettle of our resources to support them. It has added stress for everyone. ... It is a very difficult time."

Thompson says the resource centres are the linchpin in a group of support services for military families, including padres and social workers on Canadian bases.

"It's the spouses and community members of the Gagetown military community who run the family resource centre at the base," she says. "I think that's what makes it most successful."

Although McKellar and Timon say they get most of their support from other families and workers at the Gagetown resource centre, they appreciate the fact that there is strong endorsement of the military in the nearby city of Fredericton and in the town of Oromocto, the community built to accommodate CFB Gagetown.

Throughout the area, yellow ribbons flutter on telephone posts and are emblazoned on store fronts.

Timon says it's the kind of support only smaller communities can offer.

"You get support wherever you go here," says Timon, who is originally from Ontario.

"Here, you're military and they love you."

Part of a series of stories that looks at the impact of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan on life at home.

Afghans negotiate with Taliban over hostages; Militants set new deadline for conditions to be met

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DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B3

SOURCE: The Associated Press

BYLINE: Amir Shah

DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 381

Afghan clerics and tribal elders are negotiating for the release of 22 South Korean hostages, who a Taliban spokesman said yesterday have been split into small groups and are being fed bread, yogurt and rice a week after their capture.

A local police chief said the talks have been difficult because the Taliban's demands were unclear.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. "They have got problems among themselves."

The Taliban reiterated their demand that jailed militants be freed in exchange for the captives, and set the latest of several deadlines – midday today – for the condition to be met or more hostages would be killed.

One of the original group of 23 abducted Koreans, a 42-year-old pastor, was found slain with multiple gunshots Wednesday. Authorities recovered the body of Bae Hyung-kyu in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province, where the South Koreans were seized on July 19.

Bae, a founder of the Saemmul Presbyterian Church, led its volunteer work in Afghanistan and was killed on his birthday, South Korean church officials said. An official at the South Korean Embassy in Kabul said authorities were arranging to repatriate the body.

His mother, Lee Chang-suk, 68, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

At the church, about 1,000 people gathered last night to mourn Bae and pray for the other captives, many crying and consoling each other.

Relatives of other abductees, meanwhile, appealed anew for their relatives' release.

"We hope the negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban go well," said Kim Kyung-ja, mother of hostage Lee Sun-young. "Please send our lovely children home."

Cha Sung-min, 31, whose 32-year-old sister Cha Hye-jin was being held, said the families were struggling.

"After hearing the sad news, yesterday was a very difficult day," Cha said. "We believe the best way right now is to trust our government."

Afghans negotiate with Taliban over hostages; Militants set new deadline for conditions to be met 11

South Korean presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans still believed held were not suffering health problems. He said South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had spoken with Afghan President Hamid Karzai about the situation.

But one of the hostages, who identified herself as Yo Syun Ju, told an Afghan journalist by telephone that all the hostages were sick, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported. She pleaded for help to secure their release.

Brigadier-general unharmed in attack

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SECTION: National/World

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COLUMN: In brief

WORD COUNT: 133

The commander of Canada's current mission in war-torn Afghanistan escaped unharmed yesterday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant was riding in one of three vehicles in the convoy when a suicide bomber detonated a car nearby, military officials said.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack southeast of Kandahar City.

Maj. Chip Madic said the explosion happened at 5:30 p.m. when a convoy of three Canadian military vehicles – two RG-31 Nayala vehicles and one LAV-3 light armoured vehicle – was returning to Kandahar City from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base.

The car moved in as close as possible to the convoy before detonating.

Madic said the force of the explosion caused one of the Nayala vehicles to roll into a ditch. However, officials said, Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

Afghans negotiate for Korean hostages Militants set new deadline

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DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: International

PAGE: D5

SOURCE: AP

BYLINE: Amir Shah

DATELINE: Kabul, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 467

Afghan clerics and tribal elders are negotiating for the release of 22 South Korean hostages, whom a Taliban spokesman said Thursday have been split into small groups and are being fed bread, yogurt and rice a week after their capture.

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His mother, Lee Chang-suk, 68, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

At the church, about 1,000 people gathered Thursday evening to mourn Bae and pray for the other captives, many crying and consoling each other.

Relatives of other abductees, meanwhile, appealed anew for their relatives' release.

"We hope the negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban go well," said Kim Kyung-ja, mother of hostage Lee Sun-young. "Please send our lovely children home."

Cha Sung-min, 31, whose 32-year-old sister Cha Hye-jin was being held, said the families were struggling.

"After hearing the sad news, yesterday was a very difficult day," Cha said. "We believe the best way right now is to trust our government."

South Korean presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans still believed held were not suffering health problems. He said South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had spoken with Afghan President Hamid Karzai about the situation.

But one of the hostages, who identified herself as Yo Syun Ju, told an Afghan journalist by telephone that all the hostages were sick, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported. She pleaded for help to secure their release.

"Tell them to do something to get us released," she said in an interview in the presence of the Taliban militants holding her captive.

Yo, who said she was from Seoul, described her situation as "dangerous."

"Day by day it is getting very difficult," she said in the interview obtained by the BBC. "We are all sick and we have a lot of problems."

Local tribal elders and religious clerics who have respect among the people of Qarabagh district, where the Taliban kidnapped the South Koreans, have been conducting negotiations with the captors for several days.

Canadian commander escapes unharmed after convoy attacked

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Martin Ouellet

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: A Canadian soldier, part of the NATO forces, sits in his tank as he patrols the area after a suicide car bomb explosion in Kandahar province, south of Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday. A suicide car bomber detonated himself near a NATO convoy Thursday in Kandahar, but there were no injuries among the troops. – Photo by The Associated Press

WORD COUNT: 175

The commander of Canada's current mission in war-torn Afghanistan escaped unharmed Thursday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant was riding in one of three vehicles in the convoy when a suicide bomber detonated a car nearby, military officials said.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack southeast of Kandahar City.

Maj. Chip Madic said the explosion happened at 5:30 p.m. when a convoy of three Canadian military vehicles – two RG-31 Naya vehicles and one LAV-3 light armoured vehicle – was returning to Kandahar City from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base.

The car moved in as close as possible to the convoy before detonating.

Madic said the force of the explosion caused one of the Naya vehicles to roll into a ditch. However, officials said, Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle, but none of them was injured, Madic added.

Canada has 2,500 troops in the country, most of them based in the southern province of Kandahar. Sixty-six Canadian soldiers have been killed since 2002, when Canada first sent its troops to Afghanistan, following the fall of the Taliban.

Street renamed

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: Provincial

PAGE: A5

COLUMN: Briefs

DATELINE: Mount Pearl

WORD COUNT: 65

The City of Mount Pearl is renaming the part of Ruby Line that's within its borders as Richard Nolan Drive.

The street will honour the late warrant officer, a Mount Pearl native who was killed in September 2006 while serving in Afghanistan.

Mount Pearl held a contest in 2006 to rename its Ruby Line after it was realigned – an unconnected portion remains in St. John's. The dedication will be held today.

Talks with Taliban continue; Militants set new deadline to kill Korean hostages

IDNUMBER 200707270053
PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)
DATE: 2007.07.27
SECTION: News
PAGE: C11
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 419

Afghan clerics and tribal elders are negotiating for the release of 22 South Korean hostages, who a Taliban spokesman said yesterday have been split into small groups and are being fed bread, yogurt and rice a week after their capture.

A local police chief said the talks have been difficult because the Taliban's demands were unclear.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. "They have got problems among themselves."

The Taliban reiterated their demand that jailed militants be freed in exchange for the captives, and set the latest of several deadlines — midday today — for the condition to be met or more hostages would be killed.

One of the original group of 23 abducted Koreans, a 42-year-old pastor, was found slain with multiple gunshots Wednesday.

Authorities recovered the body of Bae Hyung-kyu in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province, where the South Koreans were seized on July 19.

Bae, a founder of the Saemmul Presbyterian Church, led its volunteer work in Afghanistan and was killed on his birthday, South Korean church officials said. An official at the South Korean Embassy in Kabul said authorities were arranging to repatriate the body.

His mother, Lee Chang-suk, 68, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

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South Korean presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans still believed held were not suffering health problems. He said South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had spoken with Afghan President Hamid Karzai about the situation.

But one of the hostages, who identified herself as Yo Syun Ju, told an Afghan journalist by telephone that all the hostages were sick, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported.

Yo, who said she was from Seoul, described her situation as "dangerous."

"Day by day it is getting very difficult," she said in the interview obtained by the BBC. "We are all sick and we have a lot of problems."

Local tribal elders and religious clerics who have respect among the people of Qarabagh district, where the Taliban kidnapped the South Koreans, have been conducting negotiations with the captors for several days.

Cdn. commander unharmed in suicide attack; Force of explosion flips armoured vehicle

IDNUMBER 200707270049
PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)
DATE: 2007.07.27
SECTION: News
PAGE: C1
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 130

The commander of Canada's current mission in war-torn Afghanistan escaped unharmed yesterday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant was riding in one of three vehicles in the convoy when a suicide bomber detonated a car nearby, military officials said.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack southeast of Kandahar City.

Maj. Chip Madic said the explosion happened at 5:30 p.m. when a convoy of three Canadian military vehicles — two RG-31 Nayala vehicles and one LAV-3 light armoured vehicle — was returning to Kandahar City from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base.

The car moved in as close as possible to the convoy before detonating.

Madic said the force of the explosion caused one of the Nayala vehicles to roll into a ditch.

However, officials said, Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle, but none of them was injured, Madic added.

Government to soon ponder proposal for military planes

IDNUMBER 200707270046
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.07.27
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
BYLINE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 387

The new commander of Canada's air force says proposals to replace the country's aging fleet of fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft will soon be put before the government. The Conservatives have already spent nearly \$13 billion on other new aircraft, notably the gigantic C-17 Globemaster heavy-lift transport.

But Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, who took over air force command on Thursday, said replacing fixed-wing search and rescue planes is a priority.

"Right now for fixed-wing search and rescue we are relying on two of oldest fleets, which are the Hercules and the Buffalo," he said following sweltering induction ceremony on the tarmac at Canadian Aviation Museum.

"We can continue to extend their lives and they can continue to fly safely, but at a certain point it becomes uneconomical to keep refurbishing."

The former Liberal government proposed to replace the aircraft, some of which are over 40 years old, with 15 brand new planes.

But the \$2.1-billion program has been stalled within the bureaucracy and sidelined by big-ticket purchases, such as the C-17s, the medium-lift C-130J, and the CH-47 Chinook battlefield transport helicopters, all of which are seen as essential for the war in Afghanistan.

Last winter, Watt's predecessor, Lt.-Gen Steve Lucas, told a House of Commons committee that the air force was looking at putting new engines on the Buffalos, which bear a striking resemblance to Second World War medium bombers.

"What we're trying to do is find that point where we can draw down those older planes and draw up new airplanes and we're putting proposals in front of the government to that end," said Watt, a former Sea King pilot who's also done a deputy-command stint in Afghanistan.

"It takes, from the time we sign the contract (to delivery), three years. The key problem is getting to the signature on the contract. It's hard to predict how long that will take. The sooner the better."

When the project was first announced in the spring of 2004, it was expected the last of the new planes would be on the tarmac by April 2009.

The EADS-CASA C-295 and the Alenia C-27J Spartan are believed to be the main contenders, but there has also been talk that Montreal-based Bombardier is interested in bidding.

A retired air force officer said search and rescue has been an oft-neglected corner of the military, where it took years to replace aging Labrador helicopters with new Cormorant choppers.

Larry McWha said search and rescue is something many Canadians, especially on the east and west coasts, see as essential — unlike the divisive Afghanistan mission.

"It's in our face, more so than a foreign deployment," said the former colonel.

Suicide bomber narrowly misses Canadians

IDNUMBER 200707270045
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.07.27
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
BYLINE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 139

The commander of Canada's current mission in war-torn Afghanistan escaped unharmed Thursday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant was riding in one of three vehicles in the convoy when a suicide bomber detonated a car nearby, military officials said.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack southeast of Kandahar City.

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The car moved in as close as possible to the convoy before detonating.

Madic said the force of the explosion caused one of the Nayala vehicles to roll into a ditch. However, officials said, Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle, but none of them was injured, Madic added.

Ottawa to replace aircraft; Some search and rescue planes are more than 40 years old

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A5

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Murray Brewster

ILLUSTRATION: Lt.–Gen. Angus Watt, new commander of the Canadian AirForce, chats with Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier, left, at a ceremony marking the change in command in Ottawa on Thursday. (Tom Hanson / CP)

WORD COUNT: 332

OTTAWA – The new commander of Canada's air force says proposals to replace the country's aging fleet of fixed–wing search and rescue aircraft will soon be put before the government.

The Conservatives have already spent nearly \$13–billion on other new aircraft, notably the gigantic C–17 Globemaster heavy–lift transport.

But Lt.–Gen. Angus Watt, who took over air force command on Thursday, said replacing fixed–wing search and rescue planes is a priority.

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Bomb misses top Canadian; Convoy carrying commander of Afghanistan mission attacked

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: World

PAGE: A3

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Martin Ouellet

A Canadian armoured vehicle lies on its side off the mainroad after it was attacked by a suicide car bomber in Kandahar province, south of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Thursday.

ILLUSTRATION: (Allauddin Khan / AP); A Canadian armoured vehicle lies on its side off the main road after it was attacked by a suicide car bomber in Kandahar province, south of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Thursday. (Allauddin Khan / AP)

WORD COUNT: 233

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – The commander of Canada's current mission in war-torn Afghanistan escaped unharmed Thursday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber. Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant was riding in one of three vehicles in the convoy when a suicide bomber detonated a car nearby, military officials said.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack southeast of Kandahar City.

Maj. Chip Madic said the explosion happened at 5:30 p.m. when a convoy of three Canadian military vehicles – two RG-31 Nayala vehicles and one LAV-3 light armoured vehicle – was returning to Kandahar City from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base.

The car moved in as close as possible to the convoy before detonating.

Madic said the force of the explosion caused one of the Nayala vehicles to roll into a ditch. However, officials said, Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle, but none of them was injured, Madic added.

Grant has been on the job in Afghanistan for the last nine months. Unlike many generals with the militaries in other countries, Canadian generals do not travel by helicopter and instead use the same ground transport as the troops.

The RG-31 Nayala vehicle is considered the safest in the Canadian army's fleet when it comes to protecting troops from explosive devices.

Canada has 2,500 troops in the country, most of them based in the southern province of Kandahar.

Sixty-six Canadian soldiers have been killed since 2002, when Canada first sent its troops to Afghanistan, following the fall of the Taliban.

Koreans mourn Mr. Smile's death

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: News

PAGE: A3

BYLINE: Leo Lewis The Times Of London

ILLUSTRATION: South Korean kidnap victim Bae Hyung–kyu, who was killed by the Taliban.(AP)

WORD COUNT: 403

TOKYO – Known affectionately by his parishioners as "Mr. Smile," the Rev. Bae Hyung–kyu knew the huge risks of leading young Christian missionaries into the Islamic heart of Afghanistan, yet did so with irrepressible good cheer.

On Wednesday, he paid the ultimate price for his passionate faith.

Mr. Smile died on his 42nd birthday, murdered by Taliban militants as the first victim of a hostage crisis that has shaken South Korean society to its core.

In the most broadband–connected country, the kidnapping and Bae's death have triggered an increasingly bitter online war, pitting citizens against government and bringing censorship to one of the world's most vibrant online communities.

At churches and community centres across Seoul, thousands of evangelists crumpled in grief upon hearing of his death, fearing too that it would lead to further deaths among the 22 surviving captives. Worst was the mourning at the Saemmul Presbyterian Church that Bae helped to found in 1998.

It was there that his wife and nine–year–old daughter learned of his fate.

However, the support the families have received in the real world has not been matched on Korean websites, where there was condemnation of Bae's mission.

South Korean police conducted searches Thursday in the real and virtual worlds for Internet users posting comments deemed likely to jeopardize continuing negotiations with the surviving hostages' Taliban captors.

They demanded that some online material should be removed and were considering arresting some internet users for defamation, they said. Government officials in Seoul said it was this type of commentary that "turned the crisis into a religious issue" and could do the most damage to the captives. The online furore will have been fuelled by the publication Thursday of an appeal from one of the female hostages, who begged for help and spoke of "dreadful conditions."

CBS News reported that it had spoken to Yo Cyun Ju after arranging an interview with a Taliban commander.

The hostage crisis has stirred a fervent debate among Koreans over the rights and wrongs of evangelists travelling to locations that the government has designated as a travel risk.

Because the kidnappers have used their new leverage over Seoul to demand the release of Taliban prisoners in Afghanistan and for the immediate withdrawal of South Korean troops from their country, many online pundits have used their columns and message boards to deliver harsh criticism of Bae and his group.

Others have launched direct attacks on the evangelist movement in South Korea, which sends about 1,000 new missionaries abroad each year, often to countries where they can expect an extremely hostile reception to their Christian zeal.

Seoul envoy scrambles to free hostages; 22 Christian volunteers held by Taliban

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: World

PAGE: A3

SOURCE: The Associated Press

BYLINE: Amir Shah

WORD COUNT: 484

KABUL, Afghanistan – A top South Korean official headed to Afghanistan on Thursday on a mission to secure the release of 22 Christian volunteers held captive by Taliban kidnappers after the militants killed a hostage.

A local police chief said negotiations with the Taliban captors have been difficult because their demands were unclear.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. "They have got problems among themselves."

After conflicting reports that possibly eight of the other hostages had been released, presidential spokesman Chun Ho–sun said the 22 South Koreans were still believed held but were not suffering health problems.

In new violence, U.S.–led coalition forces and Afghan troops fought two separate battles with militants in southern Afghanistan, killing more than 60 suspected Taliban insurgents. A NATO soldier was killed in another incident, officials said.

On Wednesday, authorities found the bullet–riddled body of 42–year–old Bae Hyung–kyu in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province, where the South Koreans were abducted July 19. Bae, a deputy pastor and a founder of Saemmul Presbyterian Church, was killed on his birthday, church officials said.

Bae was found with 10 bullet wounds in his head, chest and stomach, said Abdul Rahman, a police officer. Another police official, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the situation, said militants told him the hostage was sick and couldn't walk, and was therefore shot.

A church official confirmed that Bae previously had suffered from lung disease and was still taking medicine.

Bae's mother, 68–year–old Lee Chang–suk, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to Yonhap news agency.

The kidnappers "will be held accountable for taking the life of a Korean citizen," Baek Jong–chun, South Korea's chief presidential secretary for security affairs, said before leaving for Afghanistan. Chun said South Korean President Roh Moo–hyun had spoken with his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai on the situation.

Qari Yousef Ahmadi, a purported Taliban spokesman, said all 22 hostages were fine but claimed Afghan authorities were not allowing South Korean officials to negotiate directly with his group.

The hostages were being held in small groups in different locations, he said, and were being fed "the same food that our villagers have – bread, yogurt, rice."

Ghazni Police Chief Ali Shah Ahmadzai said the Afghan negotiators were speaking with the Taliban over the phone.

"We will not use force against the militants to free the hostages," he said, adding was hopeful about reaching "some sort of deal for the release of six up to eight people" later Thursday.

Marajudin Pathan, the governor of Ghazni province, said militants have given a list of eight Taliban prisoners who they want released in exchange for eight Koreans.

An Afghan official involved in the negotiations earlier said a large ransom would be paid to free eight hostages. The official also spoke on condition he not be identified, citing the matter's sensitivity. No other officials would confirm this account.

Afghans negotiate with Taliban over Korean hostages; Militants set new deadline

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B7

SOURCE: AP

DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 289

Afghan clerics and tribal elders are negotiating for the release of 22 South Korean hostages, who a Taliban spokesman said Thursday have been split into small groups and are being fed bread, yogurt and rice a week after their capture.

A local police chief said the talks have been difficult because the Taliban's demands were unclear.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. "They have got problems among themselves."

The Taliban reiterated their demand that jailed militants be freed in exchange for the captives, and set the latest of several deadlines – midday Friday – for the condition to be met or more hostages would be killed.

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His mother, Lee Chang-suk, 68, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

At the church, about 1,000 people gathered Thursday evening to mourn Bae and pray for the other captives, many crying and consoling each other.

Relatives of other abductees, meanwhile, appealed anew for their relatives' release.

"We hope the negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban go well," said Kim Kyung-ja, mother of hostage Lee Sun-young. "Please send our lovely children home."

Out for a run

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.07.27

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B7

ILLUSTRATION: U.S. President George W. Bush, centre, jogs Wednesday with wounded veterans Army Sgt. Neil Duncan, left, and Army Specialist Max Ramsey, right, on the South Lawn at the White House in Washington. Duncan lost both legs in Afghanistan and Ramsey lost his leg in Iraq. Associated Press photo

Canadian commander's convoy attacked

IDNUMBER 200707270207
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant;
KEYWORDS: WAR
BYLINE: Richard Foot
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 407

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, had a close encounter with the Taliban insurgency Thursday when a suicide bomber attacked the convoy he was riding in outside Kandahar city.

Grant, whose nine-month tour of duty as commander of Canadian forces in Kandahar is only days from ending, was not hurt in the attack. Nor were any other Canadian soldiers.

Grant was riding in a small convoy on the busy main road between Kandahar City and the nearby NATO airbase where the majority of Canadian troops are stationed.

Military officials said a suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the convoy at about 5:30 p.m., setting off a large explosion that failed to kill or injure anyone except the bomber, but that left a Canadian RG-31 Nyala, a large armoured troop carrier, lying on its side in a ditch next to the highway.

Grant declined to discuss the incident upon his return to the base. Defence officials in Ottawa were also saying little, except to confirm that Grant was not in the vehicle that was attacked.

A spokesman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said the minister was "carefully following the incident."

Grant has commanded roughly 2,500 troops in Kandahar through one of the deadliest periods of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

Sixty-seven Canadians have died there since 2002, including 22 soldiers in 2007 alone. Grant himself has overseen the repatriation of the remains of 19 Canadians killed this year by suicide attackers and roadside bombs.

Canadian officers have warned that their troops face undue risks because they must travel the country and resupply their forward operating bases using land-based convoys rather than helicopters.

"It is quite possible (the lack of transport helicopters) has cost limbs, if not more, because we have had to sustain (troops in remote bases, using vehicles) on the ground," said Lt.-Col. Ian Hope, the former commander of the Canadian battle group, in an interview with CanWest News Service last summer.

"That has produced a risk that would be reduced if we could take helicopter flights. It does not take a military tactician to know this."

Canada has no helicopters of its own in Kandahar and relies on its Dutch, U.S. and other NATO allies for the use of helicopters when it needs them.

Partly in response to its lack of air capabilities in Afghanistan, Canada recently ordered a fleet of its own Chinooks. These are not, however, expected to arrive for several more years.

A Defence Department spokesman said Thursday that Canadian commanders "have access to a number of transportation options" in Afghanistan, although he would not elaborate.

The more difficult question raised by Thursday's attack is whether insurgents are actively trying to track the movements of Canadian commanders around the country, in the hopes of killing them.

Koreans mourn murder of 'Mr. Smile'; S. Korean priest killed by Taliban amid hostage crisis

IDNUMBER 200707270192

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A16

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Reuters / Family members of South Koreans kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan react after meeting the families of other hostages Monday in Seoul. ; Photo: Bae Hyng Kyu ;

KEYWORDS: FAMILY REUNIONS; KOREAN WAR; FOREIGN RELATIONS

DATELINE: TOKYO

BYLINE: Leo Lewis

SOURCE: Times of London

WORD COUNT: 591

Known affectionately by his parishioners as "Mr Smile," the Reverend Bae Hyng Kyu knew the huge risks of leading young Christian missionaries into the Islamic heart of Afghanistan, yet did so with irrepressible good cheer.

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The online furor will have been fuelled by the publication Thursday of an appeal from one of the female hostages, who begged for help and spoke of "dreadful conditions." CBS News reported that it had spoken to Yo Cyun Ju after arranging an interview with a Taliban commander.

The Taliban have extended the deadline for negotiating the release of the hostages until noon today, according to a spokesman. A South Korean envoy flew to Afghanistan Thursday to help officials in their efforts to obtain the captives' freedom.

The hostage crisis has stirred a fervent debate among Koreans over the rights and wrongs of evangelists travelling to locations the government has designated as a travel risk.

Because the kidnappers have used their new leverage over Seoul to demand the release of Taliban prisoners in Afghanistan and for the immediate withdrawal of South Korean troops from their country, many online pundits have used their columns and message boards to deliver harsh criticism of Bae and his group.

Others have launched direct attacks on the evangelist movement in South Korea, which sends about 1,000 new missionaries abroad each year, often to countries where they can expect an extremely hostile reception to their Christian zeal.

The ferocity of the online attacks became too much for the families of the kidnap victims to bear Thursday. In tears, dozens of evangelists and supporters of the families appeared on television, begging Internet users to cease their onslaught.

In a response condemned on many websites as a "hasty and irrational constraint on free speech," the office of the president made a formal public demand that no more criticism of the missionaries should appear online.

Church groups have retaliated. Christian leaders who studied with Bae posted comments on their websites attesting to their old friend's devotion to the church and its works.

Even as he faced death at the hands of the Taliban, they reported, Bae's main concern was not for his life.

He wanted desperately to donate his organs to medical research at a hospital in Anyang, but feared they would be rejected if riddled with bullet holes.

British schoolboy intent on jihad jailed

IDNUMBER 200707270188
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A18
KEYWORDS: CRIME; GREAT BRITAIN
DATELINE: LONDON
BYLINE: Russell Jenkins
SOURCE: Times of London
WORD COUNT: 414

A schoolboy who left his parents a farewell letter telling them that he was going to fight as a soldier of Islam and would meet them again in the "garden of paradise" was jailed Thursday for two years.

Mohammed Irfan Raja ran away from his home in Ilford, East London, in February last year hoping to join four Bradford University students determined to train as terrorists in Pakistan to fight British soldiers and die as martyrs.

Raja, who was then 17, urged his parents in the letter not to blame each other for failing to stop him, but his resolve was weakened by a tearful telephone conversation in which his parents begged him to come home. He was arrested on his return after three days away and the rest of the members in the would-be terrorist cell were rounded up.

On Thursday, he was ordered at the Old Bailey to serve two years in a young offender institution.

Four others — Aitzaz Zafar, 20, Usman Malik, 21, Akbar Butt, 20, and Awaab Iqbal, also 20, who had amassed a small library glorifying Islamic terrorism to persuade others to fight the holy war — were sentenced to serve between 27 months and three years. All had been found guilty this week of possessing articles that could be used for terrorism.

Judge Peter Beaumont, the Recorder of London, said that they should be punished for being prepared to train in Pakistan and then fight in Afghanistan against British soldiers.

He told them: "Each of you is British. You were born here, your families live here, you went to school and university here. You hold British passports. You live under the protection of its laws, which give you freedom of speech and religious observance. Yet each of you was prepared to break its laws. Why? Because in my judgment you were intoxicated by the extremist nature of the material that each of you collected, shared and discussed — the songs, the images and language of violent jihad.

"So carried away by that material were you that each of you crossed the line. That is exactly what the people that peddle this material want to achieve and exactly what you did."

Iqbal, Zafar and Malik had been at the centre of a radical Islamic group at Bradford University. Police later found downloaded material said to be intended to encourage terrorism or martyrdom. Iqbal superimposed his own face and that of his friends on a poster of the 19 hijackers behind the Sept. 11 attacks and the four watched jihadi videos together.

Raja, now 19, was introduced to the group by another 17-year-old student.

Stickers are meaningless

IDNUMBER 200707270170
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A21
BYLINE: Lori Penner
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 111

Troops – Re: "Troop decals donated to families," July 25.

How does one really support Canadian troops?

By writing letters of encouragement to the soldiers? Spending time with the families left behind at home, baking them a cake and going over for coffee and play-time with the kids? Mowing the lawn for them? Having a parade? Going to Afghanistan ourselves with pom-poms and cheering, "Canadian troops! Yah Yah Yah! We support you, Rah Rah Rah!" from the sidelines?

Support our troops? How? By looking at a bumper sticker on a fire truck? Give me a break.

Putting the stickers in the hands of the Calgary Military Family Resource Centre is a good start. Like the poppy fund, the sticker fund will actually do something.

Lori Penner, Calgary

Suicide bomber misses Grant

IDNUMBER 200707270070
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: CanWest News Service / Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant had a close call on Thursday in Afghanistan, when a suicide bomber attacked his convoy. ;
BYLINE: Richard Foot
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 720

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, had a close encounter with the Taliban insurgency Thursday when a suicide bomber attacked the convoy he was riding in outside Kandahar city.

Grant, whose nine-month tour of duty as commander of Canadian forces in Kandahar is only days from ending, was not hurt in the attack. Nor were any other Canadian soldiers.

Grant was riding in a small convoy on the busy main road between Kandahar City and the nearby NATO airbase where the majority of Canadian troops are stationed.

Military officials said a suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the convoy at about 5:30 p.m., setting off a large explosion that failed to kill or injure anyone except the bomber, but that left a Canadian RG-31 Nyala, a large armoured troop carrier, lying on its side in a ditch next to the highway.

Grant declined to discuss the incident upon his return to the base. Defence officials in Ottawa were also saying little, except to confirm that Grant was not in the vehicle that was attacked.

A spokesman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said the minister was "carefully following the incident."

Grant has commanded roughly 2,500 troops in Kandahar through one of the deadliest periods of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

Sixty-seven Canadians have died there since 2002, including 22 soldiers in 2007 alone. Grant himself has overseen the repatriation of the remains of 19 Canadians killed this year by suicide attackers and roadside bombs.

Canadian officers have warned that their troops face undue risks because they must travel the country and resupply their forward operating bases using land-based convoys rather than helicopters.

"It is quite possible (the lack of transport helicopters) has cost limbs, if not more, because we have had to sustain (troops in remote bases, using vehicles) on the ground," said Lt.-Col. Ian Hope, the former commander of the Canadian battle group, in an interview with CanWest News Service last summer.

"That has produced a risk that would be reduced if we could take helicopter flights. It does not take a military tactician to know this."

Canada has no helicopters of its own in Kandahar and relies on its Dutch, U.S. and other NATO allies for the use of helicopters when it needs them.

Some of the Chinook heavy-lift helicopters used by the Dutch in Kandahar were actually sold to Holland by Canada in the 1980s by the government of former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney.

Partly in response to its lack of air capabilities in Afghanistan, Canada recently ordered a fleet of its own Chinooks. These are now, however, expected to arrive for several more years.

A Defence department spokesman said Thursday that Canadian commanders "have access to a number of transportation options" in Afghanistan, although he would not elaborate.

Grant and his predecessor, Brig.-Gen. David Fraser, have flown on NATO helicopters for various purposes in southern Afghanistan, although it's not clear how frequently foreign aircraft are made available.

The more difficult question raised by Thursday's attack is whether insurgents are actively trying to track the movements of Canadian commanders around the country, in the hopes of killing them.

Kandahar airfield is frequented by plainclothes Afghan civilians who are contracted to work there, or who drive supply trucks in and out of the base. It would not be impossible for someone inside the base, or watching its gates, to notify insurgents that a senior Canadian officer was heading out on patrol.

In the spring of 2006, several Canadian members of Fraser's permanent "close-protection" team were killed in a roadside bomb attack on their convoy north of Kandahar. Fraser was not with the squad at the time.

Elsewhere in southern Afghanistan on Thursday, the insurgency continued to claim lives, with one British soldier dying in clashes with the Taliban. This brings to 121 the number of foreign troops killed in Afghanistan this year.

Reuters also reported that U.S.-led forces killed more than 50 insurgents during operations in the southern province of Helmand. Sixteen Afghan civilians were also killed in related NATO bombing raids in Helmand, Reuters said.

In an interview earlier this week with CanWest News Service, Grant emphasized that Canada's most important work won't be completed for another three years at best.

The key to winning conditions for Canada's departure are the police now being trained by Canadians to bring law and order to the daily chaos and confusion of Afghan life, he said.

"In my mind, our mission now has everything to do with the Afghan National Police," Grant said as he prepared to hand over control of the mission to Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche of Quebec. "It will take three years, maybe longer, to give them the professionalism and confidence needed to be that front line of defence and base of governance."

South Korea sends envoy to negotiate in Taliban hostage crisis

IDNUMBER 200707270010
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: C10
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 314

GHAZNI, Afghanistan (Reuters) — South Korea sent a senior envoy to Afghanistan on Thursday to step up efforts to free 22 Christian volunteers held hostage by the Taliban after rebels killed the leader of the church group.

A Taliban spokesman said the remaining hostages were unharmed, despite the passing of a deadline overnight.

"They are safe and alive," Taliban spokesman Qari Mohammad Yousuf told Reuters by telephone from an undisclosed location. The Afghan government, he said, "has given us hope for a peaceful settlement of the issue".

In a first known contact with the outside, a South Korean woman hostage pleaded for help and a speedy release of all the hostages in a telephone interview with CBS News.

The weeping voice, which spoke in Korean and an Afghan dialect of Farsi, was believed to be that of Yoo Hyun-joo, a 32-year-old nurse.

"We are held here in very difficult conditions every day," Yoo spoke in Korean in a recording of the interview posted on CBS News Web site. "Please help us so that we can come out as soon as possible."

Yoo's brother said he could immediately recognise her voice, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said.

Seoul sent its chief presidential national security adviser, Baek Jong-chun, to boost co-ordination with the Afghan government in negotiations to free the Korean church volunteers.

He is expected to arrive in Afghanistan on Friday which could mean the Taliban may wait until at least then to see what offer, if any, he brings.

The hostages, including 18 women, were abducted from a bus in Ghazni province last week. Ghazni's governor Mirajuddin Pathan urged the Taliban to at least free the women.

"Keeping women as captives has not happened in Afghanistan's history. They should release the women," the governor said.

He said the Taliban had given the Afghan government a list of prisoners they wanted freed as part of an exchange, but he could not say if they would be released or not.

The Taliban had given the Afghan government until 2030 GMT on Wednesday to agree to exchange the group for imprisoned rebels, but the deadline passed without word from the kidnappers until Yousuf spoke on Thursday morning.

By Kwang-Tae Kim

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 511

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) _ South Korea said Thursday that 22 hostages remained in Taliban captivity after a Korean pastor was killed by the militant group in Afghanistan, drawing outrage from Seoul that warned those responsible would face consequences.

The remaining captives were not believed to suffering from health problems, said presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun.

Chun's comments followed conflicting reports from Western and Afghan officials that possibly eight of the hostages had been released.

He said South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had spoken again Thursday with his Afghan counterpart, but did not disclose the contents of their discussion.

However, Chun added that both governments were cooperating and that an Afghan official had told South Korea earlier Thursday that Kabul intended to negotiate with the Taliban. He said Seoul is aware of the Taliban's current demands but declined to specify them.

Seoul also repeated its call that no rescue mission be launched that could endanger the captives further.

"We oppose military operations and there won't be military operations that we do not consent to," Chun said.

Earlier, chief presidential secretary for security affairs Baek Jong-chun said before departing as a high-level envoy to Afghanistan that the kidnappers "will be held accountable for taking the life of a Korean citizen." He also expressed "heartfelt condolences" to the bereaved family.

The South Korean victim was found Wednesday with 10 bullet holes in his head, chest and stomach in Ghazni province, the region where the group was seized July 19 while riding a bus, said Abdul Rahman, an Afghan police officer.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry identified the victim as 42-year-old Bae Hyung-kyu.

Bae, a deputy pastor and a founder of Saemmul Presbyterian Church, led the church's volunteer work in Afghanistan. He is survived by a wife and a young daughter.

He was known for being a passionate leader of the church's 300-member youth group, where he would lead each individual in private prayer, a church official told The Associated Press, asking not to be named due to the sensitivity of the ongoing standoff.

Bae previously suffered from lung disease and had recovered, but was still taking medicine.

He regularly travelled aboard on volunteer missions twice a year, and had planned to head to Africa after returning from the Afghanistan trip.

The South Korean presidential secretary Baek said Seoul would not tolerate the Taliban's inhumane act, saying that ``the killing of an innocent civilian cannot be justified under any circumstance or for any reason."

``We once again strongly urge them to promptly return home the Korean citizens taken hostage," Baek said.

Meanwhile, some 50 anti-war activists held two separate protest rallies in downtown Seoul, demanding the U.S. and South Korea withdraw troops from Afghanistan, calling their military presence the ``seed of the tragedy."

``The fundamental cause of the kidnapping is the U.S. war against Afghanistan in the name of an anti-terror campaign, and our government's support to the U.S. by sending troops to the wrong war," said activist Jung Young-sup.

The Taliban had initially urged South Korea to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Seoul reaffirmed that it already intended to pull its troops out of the country by year-end as previously planned.

South Korea has about 200 troops serving with the 8,000-strong U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan, largely working on humanitarian projects such as medical assistance and reconstruction.

But the militants later changed their demand, asking to swap South Korean captives for an equal number of imprisoned Taliban fighters.

New U.S. documents shed light on friendly fire death of Pat Tillman

DATE: 2007.07.26
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS SPORTS JUSTICE
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 772

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) _ Army medical examiners were suspicious about the close proximity of the three bullet holes in Pat Tillman's forehead and tried without success to get authorities to investigate whether the former NFL player's death amounted to a crime, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

``The medical evidence did not match up with the scenario as described," a doctor who examined Tillman's body after he was killed on the battlefield in Afghanistan in 2004 told investigators.

The doctors _ whose names were blacked out _ said that the bullet holes were so close together that it appeared the army ranger was cut down by an M-16 fired from only about 10 metres or so away.

Ultimately, the Pentagon did conduct a criminal investigation, and asked Tillman's comrades whether he was disliked by his men and whether they had any reason to believe he was deliberately killed. The Pentagon eventually ruled that Tillman's death at the hands of his comrades was a friendly fire accident.

The medical examiners' suspicions were outlined in 2,300 pages of testimony released to the AP this week by the Defense Department in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Among other information contained in the documents:

_ In his last words moments before he was killed, Tillman snapped at a panicky comrade under fire to shut up and stop ``snivelling."

_ Army lawyers sent each other congratulatory e-mails for keeping criminal investigators at bay as the army conducted an internal friendly fire investigation that resulted in administrative, or non-criminal, punishments.

_ The three-star general who kept the truth about Tillman's death from his family and the public told investigators some 70 times that he had a bad memory and couldn't recall details of his actions.

_ No evidence at all of enemy fire was found at the scene _ no one was hit by enemy fire, nor was any government equipment struck.

The Pentagon and President George W. Bush's administration have been criticized in recent months for lying about the circumstances of Tillman's death. The military initially told the public and the Tillman family that he had been killed by enemy fire. Only weeks later did the Pentagon acknowledge he was gunned down by fellow rangers.

With questions lingering about how high in the Bush administration the deception reached, Congress is preparing for yet another hearing next week.

The Pentagon is separately preparing a new round of punishments, including a stinging demotion of retired Lt.-Gen. Philip Kensinger Jr., 60, according to military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity

because the punishments under consideration have not been made public.

In more than four hours of questioning by the Pentagon inspector general's office in December 2006, Kensing repeatedly contradicted other officers' testimony, and sometimes his own. He said on some 70 occasions that he did not recall something.

At one point, he said: ``You've got me really scared about my brain right now. I'm really having a problem."

Tillman's mother, Mary Tillman, who has long suggested that her son was deliberately killed by his comrades, said she is still looking for answers and looks forward to the congressional hearings next week.

``Nothing is going to bring Pat back. It's about justice for Pat and justice for other soldiers. The nation has been deceived," she said.

The documents show that a doctor who autopsied Tillman's body was suspicious of the three gunshot wounds to the forehead. The doctor said he took the unusual step of calling the army's Human Resources Command and was rebuffed. He then asked an official at the army's Criminal Investigation Division if the CID would consider opening a criminal case.

``He said he talked to his higher headquarters and they had said no," the doctor testified.

Also according to the documents, investigators pressed officers and soldiers on a question Mary Tillman has been asking all along.

``Have you, at any time since this incident occurred back on April 22, 2004, have you ever received any information, even rumour, that Cpl. Tillman was killed by anybody within his own unit intentionally?" an investigator asked then—Capt. Richard Scott.

Scott, and others who were asked, said they were certain the shooting was accidental.

Investigators also asked soldiers and commanders whether Tillman was disliked, whether anyone was jealous of his celebrity, or if he was considered arrogant. They said Tillman was respected, admired and well-liked.

The documents also shed new light on Tillman's last moments.

It has been widely reported by the AP and others that Specialist Bryan O'Neal, who was at Tillman's side as he was killed, told investigators that Tillman was waving his arms shouting ``Cease fire, friendlies, I am Pat (expletive) Tillman, damn it!" again and again.

But the latest documents give a different account from a chaplain who debriefed the entire unit days after Tillman was killed.

The chaplain said that O'Neal told him he was hugging the ground at Tillman's side, ``crying out to God, help us. And Tillman says to him, `Would you shut your (expletive) mouth? God's not going to help you; you need to do something for yourself, you snivelling ..."

Associated Press reporters Scott Lindlaw in Las Vegas and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this story.

By Martin Ouellet

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 223

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) _ The commander of Canada's current mission in war-torn Afghanistan escaped unharmed Thursday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant was riding in one of three vehicles in the convoy when a suicide bomber detonated a car nearby, military officials said.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack southeast of Kandahar City.

Maj. Chip Madic said the explosion happened at 5:30 p.m. when a convoy of three Canadian military vehicles _ two RG-31 Nayala vehicles and one LAV-3 light armoured vehicle _ was returning to Kandahar City from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base.

The car moved in as close as possible to the convoy before detonating.

Madic said the force of the explosion caused one of the Nayala vehicles to roll into a ditch. However, officials said, Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle, but none of them was injured, Madic added.

Grant has been on the job in Afghanistan for the last nine months. Unlike many generals with the militaries in other countries, Canadian generals do not travel by helicopter and instead use the same ground transport as the troops.

The RG-31 Nayala vehicle is considered the safest in the Canadian army's fleet when it comes to protecting troops from explosive devices.

Canada has 2,500 troops in the country, most of them based in the southern province of Kandahar.

Sixty-six Canadian soldiers have been killed since 2002, when Canada first sent its troops to Afghanistan, following the fall of the Taliban.

Afghans negotiate with Taliban, SKorean envoy scrambles to save 22 hostages

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS JUSTICE SOCIAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 748

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) _ A top South Korean official headed to Afghanistan on Thursday on a mission to secure the release of 22 Christian volunteers held captive by Taliban kidnappers after the militants killed a hostage.

A local police chief said negotiations with the Taliban captors have been difficult because their demands were unclear.

“One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money,” said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. “They have got problems among themselves.”

After conflicting reports that possibly eight of the other hostages had been released, presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans were still believed held but were not suffering health problems.

In new violence, U.S.-led coalition forces and Afghan troops fought two separate battles with militants in southern Afghanistan, killing more than 60 suspected Taliban insurgents. A NATO soldier was killed in another incident, officials said.

On Wednesday, authorities found the bullet-riddled body of 42-year-old Bae Hyung-kyu in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province, where the South Koreans were abducted July 19. Bae, a deputy pastor and a founder of Saemmul Presbyterian Church, was killed on his birthday, church officials said.

Bae was found with 10 bullet wounds in his head, chest and stomach, said Abdul Rahman, a police officer. Another police official, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the situation, said militants told him the hostage was sick and couldn't walk, and was therefore shot.

A church official confirmed that Bae previously had suffered from lung disease and was still taking medicine.

Bae's mother, 68-year-old Lee Chang-suk, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. “I never thought it possible,” she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to Yonhap news agency.

The kidnappers “will be held accountable for taking the life of a Korean citizen,” Baek Jong-chun, South Korea's chief presidential secretary for security affairs, said before leaving for Afghanistan.

Chun said South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had spoken with his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai on the situation.

Qari Yousef Ahmadi, a purported Taliban spokesman, said all 22 hostages were fine but claimed Afghan authorities were not allowing South Korean officials to negotiate directly with his group.

The hostages were being held in small groups in different locations, he said, and were being fed "the same food that our villagers have _ bread, yogurt, rice."

Ghazni Police Chief Ali Shah Ahmadzai said the Afghan negotiators were speaking with the Taliban over the phone.

"We will not use force against the militants to free the hostages," he said, adding was hopeful about reaching "some sort of deal for the release of six up to eight people" later Thursday.

Marajudin Pathan, the governor of Ghazni province, said militants have given a list of eight Taliban prisoners who they want released in exchange for eight Koreans.

An Afghan official involved in the negotiations earlier said a large ransom would be paid to free eight hostages. The official also spoke on condition he not be identified, citing the matter's sensitivity. No other officials would confirm this account.

Foreign governments are suspected to have paid ransoms in Afghanistan in the past, but have either kept quiet or denied it.

The South Koreans, including 18 women, were kidnapped while on a bus trip through Ghazni province on the Kabul–Kandahar highway, Afghanistan's main thoroughfare. Because of a recent spike in kidnappings, police announced that foreigners are no longer allowed to leave Kabul without their permission.

The South Korean church has stressed that the abducted Koreans were not involved in any Christian missionary work, saying they provided only medical and other volunteer aid.

Two Germans were also kidnapped last week. One was found dead and the other apparently remains captive. A Danish reporter escaped a kidnap attempt Wednesday in eastern Afghanistan.

In the fighting in southern Afghanistan, coalition forces and Afghan troops hit buildings in Helmand province that militants have been using to launch attacks. More than 50 Taliban were killed and several others were wounded in a 12-hour gunbattle.

"Coalition air support dropped two bombs on the compounds with the greatest concentration of insurgents," the coalition said. "Both compounds produced significant secondary explosions immediately suggesting a large quantity of explosive material was present in each."

The clash occurred near the village of Musa Qala, where a peace deal struck last year with local elders effectively ceded control of the area to Taliban fighters.

In neighbouring Kandahar province, a clash left 10 suspected militants and one policemen dead, said Sayed Afghan Saqib, Kandahar provincial police chief.

A British soldier was killed following a clash with militants in southern Afghanistan, the alliance said.

Violence has risen sharply in Afghanistan in the last two months. More than 3,500 people, mostly militants, have been killed in insurgency-related violence this year, according to an Associated Press tally of casualty figures provided by Western and Afghan officials.

60 Taliban militants killed in battles in southern Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 331

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) _ U.S.-led coalition forces and Afghan troops clashed with militants in two separate battles in southern Afghanistan, leaving more than 60 suspected Taliban dead, while a NATO soldier was killed in another incident, officials said Thursday.

Coalition forces and Afghan troops late Wednesday attacked a cluster of buildings in Helmand province that militants had used to launch attacks, triggering a 12-hour gunbattle.

“Coalition air support dropped two bombs on the compounds with the greatest concentration of insurgents,” a coalition statement said. “Both compounds produced significant secondary explosions immediately suggesting a large quantity of explosive material was present in each.”

More than 50 Taliban were killed in the clash and a number of others were wounded, the coalition said.

The clash happened near the village of Musa Qala, where a peace deal struck last year with local elders effectively ceded control of the area to Taliban fighters. Militants use the village and surrounding areas as a staging ground for raids against Afghan and foreign troops.

The most recent attack, using heavy machine-guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers on a coalition patrol, triggered the assault on the militant compound. A coalition soldier broke his hand during the engagement, it said.

“They are using Musa Qala as a base of support and it is believed that they will stay and defend the area rather than use their normal hit-and-run tactics,” the coalition said.

A NATO soldier was also killed Thursday following a clash with militants in southern Afghanistan, the alliance said in a statement. The soldier's nationality and the exact location of the clash were not revealed.

A suicide car bomber, meanwhile, detonated himself near a NATO convoy Thursday in Kandahar, but there were no injuries among the troops, said Lt. Desmond James, a Canadian officer at the site of the blast.

Canada has about 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, most of them in the southern Kandahar province.

Violence has risen sharply in Afghanistan in the last two months. More than 3,500 people, mostly militants, have been killed in insurgency-related violence this year, according to an Associated Press tally of casualty figures provided by Western and Afghan officials.

Missing–Brother

DATE: 2007.07.26

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 72

INDEX: Defence, International, Justice, Social

CLINTON, B–C — Police say there's no place left to look for Beric Bason, the young man whose brother was killed this month in Afghanistan.

The R–C–M–P's Corporal Pete Bes says Mounties are calling off the active search for the 26–year–old.

Police were using helicopters, dogs and a boat to search for Bason around the Loon Lake area of B–C's interior.

Thirty volunteers helped in the three–day search.

Bason was said to be intoxicated when he left the Loon Lake Resort early Sunday.

Bason's older brother, Colin, was killed by a roadside bomb with five other Canadian troops three weeks ago.

(CFJC)

LAK

Afghan–Cda–Suicide–Attack–Update (adds details, background)

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 103

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Canada's commander in Afghanistan escaped unharmed today when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brigadier–General Tim Grant was riding in one of three vehicles when the bomber detonated a car nearby.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack southeast of Kandahar city.

Major Chip Madic says a vehicle full of explosives blew up near the convoy as it was returning from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base.

Grant has been on the job in Afghanistan for the last nine months.

Unlike many generals with other military forces, Canadian generals do not travel by helicopter and instead use the same ground transport as their troops.

(CP)

ml, sw

INDEX:International, Defence

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 89

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – A suicide car bomber has detonated near a Canadian military convoy today southeast of Kandahar City, but there were no reports of injuries.

Maj. Chip Madic said a vehicle full of explosives blew up near the convoy as it was returning from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base.

Military sources said that Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, the commander of Canada's current mission in Afghanistan, was riding in one of the three vehicles in the convoy at the time of explosion.

Military officials said there were no injuries among the troops.

(BN)

INDEX:Defence, International

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 113

KABUL, Afghanistan — A NATO soldier has reportedly been killed during a clash with militants in southern Afghanistan.

The soldier's nationality and the location of the clash have not been revealed.

And a suicide car bomber detonated himself near a NATO convoy in Kandahar.

Canadian Forces Lieutenant Desmond James was at the site of the blast, but says no one else was injured.

Yesterday coalition forces and Afghan troops killed more than 60 suspected militants in two separate battles in southern Afghanistan.

Late yesterday, western and Afghan troops attacked a cluster of buildings in Helmand province in a 12 hour gun battle.

Coalition officials say more than 50 Taliban were killed in that clash and a number of others were wounded.

Earlier, in neighbouring Kandahar province, police say Afghan troops clashed with Taliban militants for three hours, leaving 10 suspected militants and one police officer dead.

Violence has risen sharply in Afghanistan in the last two months.

(AP)

loa

NFL–Tillman–Death

DATE: 2007.07.26

KEYWORDS: SPORTS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 200

SAN FRANCISCO – Army medical examiners were suspicious about the close proximity of the three bullet holes in Pat Tillman's forehead and tried without success to get authorities to investigate whether the former NFL player's death amounted to a crime, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

"The medical evidence did not match up with the, with the scenario as described," a doctor who examined Tillman's body after he was killed on the battlefield in Afghanistan in 2004 told investigators.

The doctors – whose names were blacked out – said that the bullet holes were so close together that it appeared the Army Ranger was cut down by an M–16 fired from a mere 10 yards or so away.

Ultimately, the Pentagon did conduct a criminal investigation, and asked Tillman's comrades whether he was disliked by his men and whether they had any reason to believe he was deliberately killed. The Pentagon eventually ruled that Tillman's death at the hands of his comrades was a friendly–fire accident.

The medical examiners' suspicions were outlined in 2,300 pages of testimony released to the AP this week by the Defense Department in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Among other information contained in the documents:

(AP)

Enlist, train and fight, but don't get wounded

IDNUMBER 200707270088
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: Letter
PAGE: AA07
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 103

Bureaucracy gap leaves some

soldiers without benefits

July 25

This article provides another reason why no one is running to enlist in the military. The treatment of returning wounded soldiers, discharged into civilian life, seems to be beyond belief. The defence minister wants young people to sign up, train, fight, but not to get wounded and return to be an embarrassment to his department or the government.

Members of Parliament should be asked to enlist some of their children to go to Afghanistan. This may well induce them to think about how they will be treated if they are wounded and returned home.

Henry Basskin, Toronto

Afghan bomber targets Canadians

IDNUMBER 200707270080
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Met
SECTION: World And Comment
PAGE: AA03
ILLUSTRATION: Allauddin Khan AP A Canadian RG-31 Nayala lies on its side yesterday after its three-vehicle convoy was attacked by a suicide car bomber in Kandahar province. ;
SOURCE: Canadian Press, Agence France-Presse
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 213

A suicide car bomber detonated yesterday near a military convoy carrying Canada's top commander in the country, but there were no reports of injuries.

The explosion happened at 5: 30 p.m. local time, when a convoy of three Canadian military vehicles – two RG-31 Nayala vehicles and one LAV-3 light armoured vehicle – was returning to Kandahar city from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base, said Maj. Chip Madic.

Military sources said that Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, commander of Canada's current mission in Afghanistan who is only days away from ending his nine-month tour, was riding in one of the three vehicles in the convoy at the time of the explosion.

When the suicide car bomb blew up, the force of the blast caused one of the Nayala vehicles to roll into a ditch, Madic said.

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle, but no one was injured, said Madic.

Military officials said Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

The RG-31 Nayala vehicle is considered the safest in the Canadian army's fleet when it comes to protecting troops from improvised explosive devices.

Canada has 2,500 troops in the war-torn country, most of them based in Kandahar province.

Earlier this month, one of deadliest explosions on NATO forces in Afghanistan destroyed an RG-31 vehicle, killing all six Canadians and an Afghan interpreter inside.

Sixty-six Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed since 2002, when Canada first sent its troops to Afghanistan, following the fall of the Taliban regime.

Fallen soldier's identity shrouded; Days-long delay in revealing name, country suspicious, Canadian observers say

IDNUMBER 200707270079
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Met
SECTION: World And Comment
PAGE: AA03
BYLINE: Allan Woods
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 579

An air of secrecy, unusual even for NATO's Afghanistan mission, surrounds the death of a lone soldier in the country's violent south.

The soldier was among six peacekeepers killed Monday, but only five were claimed by their countries.

For more than four days, the sixth soldier's sacrifice in southern Afghanistan, where Canada's troops are located, has gone unheralded. No name has emerged, no grieving family has stepped forward and no country has claimed the dead soldier as its own.

"I think that one has been slow," said Maj. John Thomas, a spokesperson with the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul. He did confirm that the soldier was a member of the NATO mission, rather than the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We can't say anything until (the identity) has been released," he said, adding that is the job of a soldier's government.

Meanwhile, concerns linger in Canada that another of the country's soldiers may have been killed, and the death toll since 2002 may have jumped to 67.

Veteran Canadian military observers said the delay, or absence, of information surrounding the death is suspicious.

"That's a ridiculous amount of time," said Scott Taylor, a former soldier and publisher of military magazine Esprit de Corps.

He recalled reading news reports on Monday that four U.S. soldiers had died after hitting an improvised explosive device in eastern Afghanistan, that a Norwegian soldier was killed in a firefight south of Kabul, and that another unidentified soldier had been killed in the country's south.

"I thought that for sure, by now, they would have identified (the soldier)," Taylor said from his Ottawa office. "It's very strange."

As Canadian deaths have mounted in the last year, reports of NATO soldiers killed in southern Afghanistan have become the code word for Canadian soldiers killed in Kandahar province, the spiritual home of the Taliban.

In those situations, the military closes the base at Kandahar Airfield to incoming or outgoing communications while they secure the scene of the incident and inform the families of dead soldiers.

An official notification for the media and the public is followed by a formal ramp ceremony as caskets are loaded on to a Hercules plane to begin the long journey back to Canada.

Sarah Cavanagh, a spokesperson with the Department of National Defence, said the only reason for withholding a dead Canadian's identity is if there are problems contacting that soldier's family.

"We try to avoid creating a state of panic and therefore contact the next of kin, and from that point we indicate that there were fallen soldiers," she said, adding that she could provide no information about the sixth soldier.

The Canadian military has been among the most secretive of the NATO allies with information about dead soldiers – particularly its top-secret special-forces squad, JTF2.

So tight-lipped is Ottawa that the death of one JTF2 soldier was only confirmed by Canadian officials after U.S. military brass made the announcement in a news conference.

On April 18, the military's penchant for secrecy ran afoul of the father of Master-Cpl. Anthony Klumpenhower, a JTF2 soldier. The 26-year-old from Listowel, Ont., fell to his death from a communications tower on the base in Kandahar, but his identity wasn't fully known until his father stepped forward to provide the media with his son's name and photograph.

Steven Staples, head of the Rideau Institute, an Ottawa-based defence think-tank, suspects that the NATO country that will eventually lay claim to the sixth dead soldier may also be succumbing to pressures of public opinion.

"The factor of casualties has become very important in determining public opinion and all NATO countries are going through the same thing that Canada is," he said.

"Already NATO is in a very precarious position in terms of the commitments of its members to extend their terms there, so I think every casualty brings NATO closer to the tipping point of countries not renewing their commitments," he added.

Fallen soldier's identity shrouded; Days-long delay in revealing name, country suspicious, Canadian observers

Army was suspicious of Tillman death

SOURCETAG 0707270554

PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Sports

PAGE: S11

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: SAN FRANCISCO

WORD COUNT: 293

Army medical examiners were suspicious about the close proximity of the three bullet holes in Pat Tillman's forehead and tried without success to get authorities to investigate whether the former NFL player's death amounted to a crime, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

"The medical evidence did not match up with the, with the scenario as described," a doctor who examined Tillman's body after he was killed on the battlefield in Afghanistan in 2004 told investigators.

The doctors — whose names were blacked out — said that the bullet holes were so close together that it appeared the Army Ranger was cut down by an M-16 fired from a mere 10 yards or so away.

Ultimately, the Pentagon did conduct a criminal investigation, and asked Tillman's comrades whether he was disliked by his men and whether they had any reason to believe he was deliberately killed. The Pentagon eventually ruled that Tillman's death at the hands of his comrades was a friendly-fire accident.

IN OTHER NFL NEWS YESTERDAY:

— St. Louis Rams quarterback Marc Bulger, who is seeking a new contract, was a no-show for a mandatory team meeting the day before the start of training camp.

Rams coach Scott Linehan said team officials were meeting with Bulger's representatives and was hopeful that Bulger would be on the field for the first practice this morning.

"I'd be surprised if he wasn't," Linehan said. "I think it'll be resolved."

Linehan said the two-time Pro Bowl quarterback's no show was an excused absence, for now, and there would be no fine.

— Quarterback J.P. Losman was held out for the start of Buffalo Bills training camp after straining his lower back working out this week.

Coach Dick Jauron listed Losman as day to day, but noted the quarterback will be placed on the physically unable to perform list. Losman can be activated off the list at any time.

— Tampa Bay's Gaines Adams became the highest pick in this year's draft to sign a contract when he agreed to a six-year, US\$46-million deal that enabled him to report to training camp on time.

KEYWORDS=FOOTBALL

Canucks targeted in blast General escapes injury from suicide car bomber; South Korean hostages still being held

SOURCETAG 0707270401

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 7

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

WORD COUNT: 259

A suicide car bomber detonated near a Canadian military convoy yesterday southeast of Kandahar City, but there were no reports of injuries.

Military sources said that Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, the commander of Canada's current mission in Afghanistan, was riding in one of the three vehicles in the convoy at the time of explosion.

When the suicide car bomb blew up about 18 km southeast of the Canadian base, the force of the blast caused one of the vehicles to roll into a ditch, Maj. Chip Madic said.

FOUR TROOPS

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle. Military officials said Grant was not in that vehicle.

Meanwhile, a top South Korean official headed to Afghanistan yesterday on a mission to secure the release of 22 Christian volunteers held captive by Taliban kidnappers after the militants killed a hostage.

A local police chief said negotiations with the Taliban captors have been difficult because their demands were unclear. "One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi.

After conflicting reports that possibly eight of the other hostages had been released, presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans were still believed held but were not suffering health problems.

The kidnappers "will be held accountable for taking the life of a Korean citizen," Baek Jong-chun, South Korea's chief presidential secretary for security, said before leaving for Afghanistan.

60 KILLED

On Wednesday, authorities found the bullet-riddled body of Bae Hyung-kyu near where the South Koreans were abducted July 19.

Elsewhere, U.S. and Afghan troops fought two separate battles with militants in southern Afghanistan, killing more than 60 suspected insurgents.

A NATO soldier was also killed following a clash with militants in southern Afghanistan, the alliance said in a statement. The soldier's nationality was not revealed. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Fervour and naivete lead 'missionaries' into harm's way

IDNUMBER 200707270036
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: A9
COLUMN: Jonathan Manthorpe
KEYWORDS: FAMILY REUNIONS; FOREIGN RELATIONS; KOREAN WAR;
NUCLEARWEAPONS; SUMMIT CONFERENCES
BYLINE: Jonathan Manthorpe
SOURCE: Vancouver Sun
WORD COUNT: 645

Christianity is a fiercely competitive business in South Korea, with evangelists vying to attract followers by demonstrating ever more outlandish feats of holiness.

Sending missionaries in large numbers to the world's most violent trouble spots is seen as a surefire way of filling the churches with admiring disciples.

These days, dispatching missionaries to Afghanistan and Iraq, into the jaws of militant Islam, is the ultimate demonstration of Christian fervour.

And the larger the army of followers, of course, the larger the spiritual and financial rewards.

It is a tried and true promotional technique that has produced a surge in popularity for Christianity since the Second World War. A recent survey by the Pew organization found 26.3 per cent of South Koreans say they are Christians, a proportion second only to the Philippines in Asia.

Most belong to fundamentalist protestant or evangelical Christian churches where the passion for missionary zeal has always been strong.

There are nearly 13,000 South Korean missionaries operating in about 160 countries.

In some popular missionary destinations, such as Africa, there are sometimes hundreds of South Korean missionaries in the same town. There are even reports that the competition among evangelists sometimes becomes so intense there have been fistfights over territory.

Only the United States with 46,000 missionaries abroad has a larger army of faith, but as a proportion of population the South Korean missionary force is much larger.

However, to call these people missionaries is not always accurate. Most are not bent on making converts, but are more like aid agency workers.

Indeed, the South Korean missionary operations are more like those Japanese television game shows where the prize goes to the contestant who takes the greatest humiliation and still comes up grinning.

The missionaries are frequently naive young people driven by an unfocused desire to do good, just like most of the 23 South Korean hostages taken by the Taliban on the road from Kabul to Kandahar in Afghanistan last week.

The group is made up mostly of young women who were not off to try to convert Afghan Muslims to Christianity, but to provide medical and child-care services for needy people.

They were led by pastor Bae Hyung-kyum from their Saemmul Presbyterian Church, just outside the South Korean capital Seoul. The Taliban demanded that some of their people being held by the Afghan government be released, but there seems also to have been a ransom demand.

It is not yet clear whether the negotiations stumbled over the refusal of the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai to release Taliban prisoners — though it did so in March to get the freedom of a kidnapped Italian journalist — or the Kabul government's obstruction of the Koreans' efforts to pay a ransom.

At any rate, the Taliban became agitated, shot Bae a dozen times and dumped his body by the highway.

This is not the first time South Korean missionary operations have come to grief in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere.

In April 2004, terrorists in Iraq kidnapped and beheaded an aspiring South Korean missionary, Kim Sun-il. Earlier this year a South Korean pastor was killed in Kenya and hundreds of South Korean missionaries are believed to be in prison in China after trying to convert people in refugee camps for North Koreans.

In August last year a potentially highly dangerous event was narrowly avoided when the Kabul and Seoul governments managed to stop 1,300 South Korean evangelicals from travelling to Afghanistan to hold a public peace rally.

The giggly group of young Saemmul Church missionaries even posed with raised clenched fists for a photograph before their July departure from Seoul's international airport in front of a government notice advising Koreans not to travel to Afghanistan.

But avoiding government barriers and disapproval in both Seoul and Kabul is one of the joys of competition in these missionary contests. Overcoming bureaucratic hurdles brings bragging rights and more followers.

The death of Bae and the uncertain fate of the remaining 22 young hostages has had a sobering effect on South Korean public opinion. There is now much questioning of the habit of sending neophyte young people to these dangerous places without even the most basic training in the type of cultural quagmires they will face.

Sun International Affairs Columnist

jmanthorpe@png.canwest.com

Envoy to step up Afghan efforts

SOURCETAG 0707270281

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A5

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Reuters IN PRAYER: South Koreans make characters reading "Safe return" with candles during a rally demanding for the safe return of the kidnapped Koreans and the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan in central Seoul yesterday. The Taliban have not killed the remaining 22 South Korean Christian volunteers held hostage in Afghanistan despite a deadline passing, a Taliban spokesperson said yesterday.

BYLINE: REUTERS

DATELINE: GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN

WORD COUNT: 290

South Korea sent a senior envoy to Afghanistan yesterday to step up efforts to free 22 Christian volunteers held hostage by the Taliban after rebels killed the leader of the church group.

A Taliban spokesperson said the remaining hostages were unharmed, despite the passing of a deadline overnight.

"They are safe and alive," Taliban spokesperson Qari Mohammad Yousuf told Reuters from an undisclosed location. The Afghan government, he said, "has given us hope for a peaceful settlement of the issue."

In a first known contact with the outside, a South Korean woman hostage pleaded for help and a speedy release of all the hostages in a telephone interview with CBS News.

The weeping voice, which spoke in Korean and an Afghan dialect of Farsi, was believed to be that of Yoo Hyun-joo, a 32-year-old nurse.

"We are held here in very difficult conditions every day," Yoo spoke in Korean in a recording of the interview posted on CBS News website. "Please help us so that we can come out as soon as possible."

Yoo's brother said he could recognize her voice, South Korea's news agency said.

Seoul sent its chief presidential national security adviser, Baek Jong-chun, to boost co-ordination with the Afghan government in negotiations to free the Korean church volunteers.

He is expected to arrive in Afghanistan today which could mean the Taliban may wait until at least then to see what offer, if any, he brings.

The hostages, including 18 women, were abducted from a bus in Ghazni province last week. Ghazni's governor Mirajuddin Pathan urged the Taliban to at least free the women.

"Keeping women as captives has not happened in Afghanistan's history. They should release the women," the governor said.

He said the Taliban had given the Afghan government a list of prisoners they want freed as part of an exchange, but he could not say if they would be released.

The Taliban had given the Afghan government until Wednesday to agree to exchange the group for imprisoned rebels, but the deadline passed without word from the kidnappers until Yousuf spoke yesterday.

The past 18 months have seen rising violence in Afghanistan, with daily clashes between Taliban insurgents and Afghan and foreign troops. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Farewell ceremony for soldiers

SOURCETAG 0707270845

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 33

WORD COUNT: 54

Over six dozen Edmonton-based soldiers deploying for Afghanistan next month will be wished a fond farewell at an official military ceremony today at Edmonton Garrison.

The soldiers are from 1 Combat Engineer Regiment and the Lord Strathcona's Horse tank squadron.

They will serve as part of a 2,300-soldier task force, made up largely of other Armed Forces personnel from Valcartier, Que. KEYWORDS=EDMONTON

Canucks targeted in blast General escapes injury from suicide car bomber; South Korean hostages still being held

SOURCETAG 0707270834

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 18

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 259

A suicide car bomber detonated near a Canadian military convoy yesterday southeast of Kandahar City, but there were no reports of injuries.

Military sources said that Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, the commander of Canada's current mission in Afghanistan, was riding in one of the three vehicles in the convoy at the time of explosion.

When the suicide car bomb blew up about 18 km southeast of the Canadian base, the force of the blast caused one of the vehicles to roll into a ditch, Maj. Chip Madic said.

FOUR TROOPS

There were at least four troops inside the vehicle. Military officials said Grant was not in that vehicle.

Meanwhile, a top South Korean official headed to Afghanistan yesterday on a mission to secure the release of 22 Christian volunteers held captive by Taliban kidnappers after the militants killed a hostage.

A local police chief said negotiations with the Taliban captors have been difficult because their demands were unclear. "One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi.

After conflicting reports that possibly eight of the other hostages had been released, presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans were still believed held but were not suffering health problems.

The kidnappers "will be held accountable for taking the life of a Korean citizen," Baek Jong-chun, South Korea's chief presidential secretary for security, said before leaving for Afghanistan.

60 KILLED

On Wednesday, authorities found the bullet-riddled body of Bae Hyung-kyu near where the South Koreans were abducted July 19.

Elsewhere, U.S. and Afghan troops fought two separate battles with militants in southern Afghanistan, killing more than 60 suspected insurgents.

A NATO soldier was also killed following a clash with militants in southern Afghanistan, the alliance said in a statement. The soldier's nationality was not revealed. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Canucks targeted in blast General escapes injury from suicide car bomber; South Korean hostages still being

Search plane push in gear Plan drawn up to replace fleet

SOURCETAG 0707270692

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 18

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Tom Hanson, CP Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier, left, chats with Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, new commander of the Canadian Air Force. Watt said replacing search-and-rescue planes is a priority.

BYLINE: CP

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 186

The new commander of Canada's air force says proposals to replace the country's aging fleet of fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft will soon be put before the government.

The Conservatives have already spent nearly \$13-billion on other new aircraft, notably the gigantic C-17 Globemaster heavy-lift transport.

But Lt.-Gen. Angus Watt, who took over air force command yesterday, said replacing fixed-wing search and rescue planes is a priority.

"Right now for fixed-wing search and rescue we are relying on two of the oldest fleets, which are the Hercules and the Buffalo," he said following an induction ceremony on the tarmac at Canadian Aviation Museum.

"We can continue to extend their lives and they can continue to fly safely, but at a certain point it becomes uneconomical to keep refurbishing."

The former Liberal government proposed to replace the aircraft, some of which are more than 40 years old, with 15 new planes.

But the \$2.1-billion program has been stalled within the bureaucracy and sidelined by big-ticket purchases, such as the C-17s, the medium-lift C-130J, and the CH-47 Chinook battlefield transport helicopters, all of which are seen as essential for the war in Afghanistan.

Last winter, Watt's predecessor, Lt.-Gen Steve Lucas, said the air force was looking at putting new engines on the Buffalos, which bear a striking resemblance to Second World War medium bombers.

KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Canucks targeted in blast General escapes injury from suicide car bomber; South Korean hostages still being held

SOURCETAG 0707270679

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 259

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Canucks targeted in blast General escapes injury from suicide car bomber; South Korean hostage still being

The battle is joined. Hats off to the Gas City for deciding on yellow decals. Let the Terrible Ten know how you feel ... and tell them Page Five sent you.

SOURCETAG 0707270671

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 5

BYLINE: RICK BELL

COLUMN: Page Five

WORD COUNT: 579

The decal fight may not be over just yet.

Ald. Ric McIver is now thinking seriously about bringing the battle back to council one more time at the next episode of Bronco's Puppet Show, on the eve of 9/11.

"Members of council need to go into the October election with their record clear," says McIver, a man not known for giving up while he can still stand. "They're starting to sound like Stephane Dion saying they support, but they don't support."

At least in the Hat, their city council can hold its head high. On the same night as our gutless city council votes 11–4 against putting Support Our Troops decals on city vehicles, the aldermen of Medicine Hat decide to attach the decals, the symbolic but powerful signs of visible support, to their fleet of wheels.

They are even willing to buy the decals while Calgary was getting them gratis. The amount of contentious debate in the Hat? None. The vote? Unanimous.

The politicians in the Gas City are not full of hot air like our bunch. They recognize Canadians are pro and con about the current mission in Afghanistan, but they are aware we all presumably still support the troops. So there's no problem. Decals go on.

The Hat does it all. They also plan a recognition ceremony next month honouring soldiers in the area and local police officers who've been a part of overseas efforts.

Yes, the city has a close relationship to our troops and to British soldiers who train nearby. The battle-honoured South Alberta Light Horse are in Medicine Hat.

The whole question is really a no-brainer. Then again, looking at Calgary city council, it requires some brains to recognize a no-brainer.

Ald. Cathy Smith, a straight-talking member of the council in Medicine Hat, can't believe what Calgary's mayor and council have done.

Her daughter was at the Calgary Stampede parade and told Cathy how beautiful it was so many Calgarians stood up and applauded the military along the route.

The battle is joined. Hats off to the Gas City for deciding on yellow decals. Let the Terrible Ten know how you

Then, this week, what a different picture? A big majority of Calgary's city council deep-sixes decals. Ten aldermen tag along with the mayor, who claims he doesn't want decals because he wants something more tangible even though everyone knows the decals are very tangible, visible illustrations and constant reminders of what we feel.

Let's call a spade a spade. Bronco doesn't want the decals because they are TOO tangible. That's why he'll sell decals and go to a parade, both fine gestures, but he hates decals on city vehicles. The man plays with our heads.

In Cathy's mind, and in the grey matter of many others, it doesn't fit.

"I was extremely disappointed. It was stupid. Are these people on your council really representing the citizens of Calgary, or are they out for their own personal agenda?" asks Cathy.

"I know the answer. They're a bunch of Liberals. You could have done it all, decals and parades and other things. But the soldiers have told us about the visual impact of the decals. In this community, we believe in our troops."

In fact, Cathy says Bronco making us think Gen. Rick Hillier, Canada's top uniform, is against decals is "baloney."

"I was there when Hillier gave the speech in Calgary. I was in the second row."

By the way, Cathy tells me Alec MacDougald of the Hat was so impressed with the council's decision he's cutting a \$500 cheque to pay for half their decals. Good.

To think garbage politics happened here, one-time home to Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) and still home to those in top-notch units such as the Calgary Highlanders and the King's Own Calgary Regiment.

Ald. McIver says people feel insulted by this city council. Our city didn't gain any gold stars elsewhere.

"I'm glad Medicine Hat did the right thing. They must be holding their heads high."

They are.

For the record, the 10 aldermen, the Terrible Ten, who voted against Support Our Troops decals on city vehicles are: Joe Ceci, Druh Farrell, Linda Fox-Mellway, Diane Colley-Urquhart, Gord Lowe, Bob Hawkesworth, Craig Burrows, Helene Larocque, Dale Hodges, Madeleine King. Then, to round it out to 11 is the mayor, the puppet master.

If you want to tell any of the Terrible Ten how you feel, call them at 268-2430. If you'd like to give Bronco a piece of your mind, call 268-5622.

Tell them Page Five sent you. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

The battle is joined. Hats off to the Gas City for deciding on yellow decals. Let the Terrible Ten know how you

General escapes injury in attack

IDNUMBER 200707270010
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: D8
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 260

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's top commander in Afghanistan, had a close call on Thursday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Grant, who escaped injury, was in one of three vehicles in a convoy when a minivan full of explosives approached at around 5:30 p.m. local time.

The blast was powerful enough to toss a Canadian RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle onto its side.

The soldiers inside did not sustain any injuries, according to the news reports. Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over. The commander is just days away from finishing his nine-month tour in Afghanistan.

The incident occurred about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base in Kandahar City on a main road that links the base with downtown Kandahar. The road was closed following the blast and a response team was sent to secure the area, news reports say.

Earlier in the day in a separate incident, a British soldier was killed during a battle with Taliban insurgents in southern Afghanistan where Canadian troops are also stationed. About 2,500 Canadian troops are serving in Afghanistan.

On July 4, Six Canadian soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb hit their vehicle — also an RG-31, which is considered one of the Canada's safest military vehicles. The dead are Capt. Matthew Johnathan Dawe, Cpl. Cole Bartsch, Cpl. Jordan Anderson and Pte. Lane Watkins, all of 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, based in Edmonton, and Master-Cpl. Colin Bason, a reservist from The Royal Westminster Regiment and Capt. Jefferson Clifford Francis of 1 Royal Canadian Horse Artillery based in Shilo Manitoba.

(Global National)

Afghan suicide bomber hits Canadian general's convoy; Blast injures no Canadian soldiers, but leaves armoured vehicle damaged in ditch

IDNUMBER 200707270137

PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A5

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: CNS / Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, seen here with Minister of International Co-operation Josee Verner in Kandhar in April, narrowly escaped an attack by a suicide bomber yesterday. ;

BYLINE: Richard Foot

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 439

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, had a close encounter with the Taliban insurgency yesterday when a suicide bomber attacked the convoy he was riding in outside Kandahar City.

Grant, whose nine-month tour of duty as commander of Canadian forces in Kandahar is only days from ending, was not hurt in the attack. Nor were any other Canadian soldiers.

Grant was riding in a small convoy on the busy main road between Kandahar City and the nearby NATO airbase where the majority of Canadian troops are stationed.

Military officials said a suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the convoy at about 5:30 p.m., setting off a large explosion that failed to kill or injure anyone except the bomber, but that left a Canadian RG-31 Nyala, a large armoured troop carrier, lying on its side in a ditch next to the highway.

Grant declined to discuss the incident upon his return to the base. Defence officials in Ottawa were also saying little, except to confirm that Grant was not in the vehicle that was attacked.

A spokesman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said the minister was "carefully following the incident."

Grant has commanded roughly 2,500 troops in Kandahar through one of the deadliest periods of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

Sixty-seven Canadians have died there since 2002, including 22 soldiers in 2007 alone.

Canadian officers have warned that their troops face undue risks because they must travel the country and resupply their forward operating bases using land-based convoys rather than helicopters.

"It is quite possible [the lack of transport helicopters] has cost limbs, if not more, because we have had to sustain (troops in remote bases, using vehicles) on the ground," said Lt.-Col. Ian Hope, the former commander of the Canadian battle group, in an interview with CanWest News Service last summer.

Afghan suicide bomber hits Canadian general's convoy; Blast injures no Canadian soldiers, but leaves armoured vehicle damaged in ditch

"That has produced a risk that would be reduced if we could take helicopter flights. It does not take a military tactician to know this."

Canada has no helicopters of its own in Kandahar and relies on its Dutch, U.S. and other NATO allies for the use of helicopters when it needs them.

Some of the Chinook heavy-lift helicopters used by the Dutch in Kandahar were actually sold to Holland by Canada in the 1980s by the government of former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney.

The more difficult question raised by yesterday's attack is whether insurgents are actively trying to track the movements of Canadian commanders around the country, in the hopes of killing them.

Kandahar Airfield is frequented by plainclothes Afghan civilians who are contracted to work there, or who drive supply trucks in and out of the base. It would not be impossible for someone inside the base, or watching its gates, to notify insurgents that a senior Canadian officer was heading out on patrol.

In the spring of 2006, several Canadian members of the "close-protection" team guarding Grant's predecessor were killed in a roadside bomb attack on their convoy north of Kandahar.

Search for reservist's brother lost in Cariboo called off

IDNUMBER 200707270123
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
COLUMN: Canada Briefing
DATELINE: CLINTON
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 96

CLINTON — Police and rescue teams have called off the search for Beric Bason, whose brother was killed earlier this month in Afghanistan.

Bason, 26, disappeared early Sunday around Loon Lake after a heavy night of drinking. Since then, two police helicopters, a police boat, police quads, and approximately 30 search and rescue personnel from Logan Lake, Kamloops, Barriere and 100 Mile House have scoured the area.

Bason's brother Colin Basin, 28, a reservist from Abbotsford, was killed on July 4 with five other Canadian soldiers when their vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb.

South Korea sends envoy to free hostages

IDNUMBER 200707270111

PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A15

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Reuters / A portrait of Bae Hyung-gyu was framed at Saemmul church in Seongnam, South Korea, yesterday. Bae, a 42-year-old pastor who was the leader of 22 church volunteers, was killed in Afghanistan. ;

DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan

SOURCE: Reuters

WORD COUNT: 263

GHAZNI, Afghanistan (Reuters) — South Korea sent a senior envoy to Afghanistan yesterday to step up efforts to free 22 Christian volunteers held hostage by the Taliban after rebels killed the leader of the church group.

A Taliban spokesman said the remaining hostages were unharmed, despite the passing of a deadline overnight.

"They are safe and alive," Taliban spokesman Qari Mohammad Yousuf told Reuters by telephone from an undisclosed location. The Afghan government, he said, "has given us hope for a peaceful settlement of the issue."

In a first known contact with the outside, a female South woman hostage pleaded for help and a speedy release of all the hostages in a telephone interview with CBS News. The weeping voice, which spoke in Korean and an Afghan dialect of Farsi, was believed to be that of Yoo Hyun-joo, 32, a nurse.

"We are held here in very difficult conditions every day," Yoo spoke in Korean in a recording of the interview posted on CBS News website. "Please help us so that we can come out as soon as possible."

Yoo's brother said he could immediately recognize her voice, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said.

Seoul sent its chief presidential national security adviser, Baek Jong-chun, to boost co-ordination with the Afghan government in negotiations to free the Korean church volunteers.

He is expected to arrive in Afghanistan today which could mean the Taliban may wait until at least then to see what offer, if any, he brings.

The hostages, 18 women and four men, were abducted from a bus in Ghazni province last week. Ghazni's governor Mirajuddin Pathan urged the Taliban to at least free the women.

"Keeping women as captives has not happened in Afghanistan's history. They should release the women," the governor said.

S. Korean envoy helps in hostage standoff

IDNUMBER 200707270184
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: World Digest
KEYWORDS: HOSTAGES; WAR; FOREIGN AID; AFGHANISTAN
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 71

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – South Korea sent a senior envoy to Afghanistan on Thursday to step up efforts to free 22 Christian volunteers held hostage by the Taliban after rebels killed the leader of the church group. A Taliban spokesman said the remaining hostages were unharmed. "They are safe and alive," Taliban spokesman Qari Mohammad Yousuf told Reuters by telephone.

Canadian commander has close call with bomber; No troops hurt in latest Taliban attack in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200707270183

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Early

SECTION: News

PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Don Martin, CanWest News Service / Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant hands out combat medals to troops preparing to leave Afghanistan on Monday. Grant had a close call on Thursday when a bomb hit a convoy in which he was travelling. ;

KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM

BYLINE: Richard Foot

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 505

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, had a close encounter with the Taliban insurgency Thursday when a suicide bomber attacked the convoy he was riding in outside Kandahar city.

Grant, whose nine-month tour of duty as commander of Canadian forces in Kandahar is only days from ending, was not hurt in the attack. Nor were any other Canadian soldiers.

Grant was riding in a small convoy on the busy main road between Kandahar City and the nearby NATO airbase where the majority of Canadian troops are stationed.

Military officials said a suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the convoy at about 5:30 p.m., setting off a large explosion that failed to kill or injure anyone except the bomber, but that left a Canadian RG-31 Nyala, a large armoured troop carrier, lying on its side in a ditch next to the highway.

Grant declined to discuss the incident upon his return to the base. Defence officials in Ottawa were also saying little, except to confirm that Grant was not in the vehicle that was attacked.

A spokesman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said the minister was "carefully following the incident."

Grant has commanded roughly 2,500 troops in Kandahar through one of the deadliest periods of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

Sixty-seven Canadians have died there since 2002, including 22 soldiers in 2007 alone. Grant himself has overseen the repatriation of the remains of 19 Canadians killed this year by suicide attackers and roadside bombs.

Canadian officers have warned that their troops face undue risks because they must travel the country and resupply their forward operating bases using land-based convoys rather than helicopters.

"It is quite possible (the lack of transport helicopters) has cost limbs, if not more, because we have had to sustain (troops in remote bases, using vehicles) on the ground," said Lt.-Col. Ian Hope, the former

Canadian commander has close call with bomber; No troops hurt in latest Taliban attack in Afghanistan

commander of the Canadian battle group, in an interview with CanWest News Service last summer.

"That has produced a risk that would be reduced if we could take helicopter flights. It does not take a military tactician to know this."

Canada has no helicopters of its own in Kandahar and relies on its Dutch, U.S. and other NATO allies for the use of helicopters when it needs them.

Some of the Chinook heavy-lift helicopters used by the Dutch in Kandahar were actually sold to Holland by Canada in the 1980s by the government of former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney.

Partly in response to its lack of air capabilities in Afghanistan, Canada recently ordered a fleet of its own Chinooks. These are now, however, not expected to arrive for several more years.

A Defence Department spokesman said Thursday that Canadian commanders "have access to a number of transportation options" in Afghanistan, although he would not elaborate.

Grant and his predecessor, Brig.-Gen. David Fraser, have flown on NATO helicopters for various purposes in southern Afghanistan, although it's not clear how frequently foreign aircraft are made available.

In the spring of 2006, several Canadian members of Fraser's permanent "close-protection" team were killed in a roadside bomb attack on their convoy north of Kandahar. Fraser was not with the squad at the time.

Elsewhere in southern Afghanistan on Thursday, the insurgency continued to claim lives, with one British soldier dying in clashes with the Taliban. This brings to 121 the number of foreign troops killed in Afghanistan this year.

Taliban set new deadline for S. Korean hostages

IDNUMBER 200707270181
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: World Digest
KEYWORDS: FOREIGN RELATIONS; FAMILY REUNIONS; NUCLEAR WEAPONS;
FOREIGNAID; KOREAN WAR; SUMMIT CONFERENCES; AFGHANISTAN
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 81

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – Taliban kidnappers will kill their remaining 22 South Korean hostages unless the government releases eight rebel prisoners by early today, a spokesman said. The Taliban have already killed the leader of the 23 Korean Christian volunteers they snatched from a bus on the main highway south of the capital Kabul last week, but several previous deadlines have passed without them carrying out their threats.

Secrecy surrounds identity of soldier killed in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200707270098
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: Ottawa
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 90

An air of secrecy unusual even for NATO's Afghanistan mission surrounds the death of a lone soldier in the country's violent south.

The soldier was one of six killed Monday but only five — four Americans and a Norwegian were identified.

The delay in identifying the sixth casualty, in the area where Canada's troops are concentrated, has prompted concerns that it's another Canadian.

Veteran military observers said the absence of information is suspicious.

"That's a ridiculous amount of time," said Scott Taylor, a former soldier and publisher of military magazine Esprit de Corps. "It's very strange."

A government spokesperson said the only reason for withholding a dead Canadian's identity would be problems contacting family.

Close call for the boss

IDNUMBER 200707270097

PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Canada/World

PAGE: A3

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Allauddin Khan, the Associated Press /; Photo: Cp Photo/ James McCarten / ;

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 161

The commander of Canada's current mission in war-torn Afghanistan escaped unharmed yesterday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brig.-General Tim Grant, above, was riding in one of three vehicles in the convoy when a suicide bomber detonated a car nearby.

There were no reports of injuries.

The force of the explosion caused one of two RG-31 Nayala vehicles, right, to roll into a ditch. Grant was not in that vehicle, which was carrying at least four troops. The third vehicle in the convoy was a LAV-3 light armoured vehicle.

The attack happened at 5:30 p.m. when the convoy was returning to Kandahar City from the town of Shur Andan, about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base. The car's driver moved in as close as possible to the convoy before detonating his bomb.

Grant has been on the job in Afghanistan for the last nine months. Unlike many generals with the militaries in other countries, Canadian generals do not travel by helicopter and instead use the same ground transport as the troops.

Taliban demands unclear over hostages

IDNUMBER 200707270092
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: Kabul
SOURCE: The Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 112

Afghan clerics and tribal elders negotiating for the release of 22 South Korean hostages say the talks have been difficult so far because the Taliban's demands are unclear at this point.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said one negotiator.

One Taliban spokesman reiterated their demand that jailed militants be freed in exchange for the captives, and set the latest of several deadlines — midday tonight.

One of the original group of 23 abducted Koreans was found slain Wednesday.

Afghanistan's government brokered a much-criticized prisoner swap in March 2007 in which five captive Taliban fighters were freed for the release of an Italian reporter.

But the militants killed the reporter's translator and driver.

Korea's anguish; Viewpoint: Chosun Ilbo (Korea)

IDNUMBER 200707270069
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A12
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 484

Of 23 Koreans taken hostage by Taliban militants in Afghanistan last week, one has been killed (as of yesterday, when this editorial was published). The tragedy dashes the hopes for the safe return of all Korean hostages.

Meanwhile, it remains uncertain whether eight other hostages had really been freed. Neither the identities of the reportedly released people nor the demands of the captors and the conditions of the remaining hostages was known. Conflicting reports confused people, with the government failing to provide official confirmation. Koreans are dumbfounded by the sudden reversal in the hostage crisis after earlier reports were largely optimistic.

Reported statements from the Taliban do not encourage optimism. The Islamist militia justified their actions saying they killed the Korean because the Afghan government did not keep its promise to free Taliban prisoners in exchange for the release of the hostages.

The Taliban warned they will kill more hostages if the situation doesn't go their way. The Afghan government finds itself in a tight spot, having come under fire after freeing five Taliban prisoners in an earlier attempt to rescue an Italian reporter who was kidnapped by the Islamist group. If the Taliban insist on the demand for the release of prisoners, the hostage crisis will get worse.

International reports say that Afghan and U.S. forces are moving to quell Taliban militants. There are also indications of internal conflict among the Taliban over the abduction of the Koreans.

What matters most now is the condition of the remaining hostages. The repeated extension of negotiation deadlines must be agony for the victims, who are detained in a dry mountainous region and in fear for their lives. Some hostages are reportedly not in good health. It has been eight days since they were kidnapped. The mental anguish and physical suffering of the survivors must be unbearable.

Our sole task is to bring the remaining hostages back home safely. Any military operations to rescue them should be the last option. Korea should persuade Afghanistan and the U.S. to shelve any military plan and continue to negotiate with the Taliban. We cannot afford to abandon even a shred of hope.

Since 2003, 10 abductions of foreigners have taken place in Afghanistan and none of the hostage negotiations went smoothly. But negotiations have frequently succeeded and hostages were freed. The government is the only hope for the families of the hostages. It must maximize its diplomatic capabilities.

The death of the hostage brings home with brutal clarity that Korea is part of the international community. Koreans should be very cautious when going overseas and remember that we are targets for terrorists. Life is

cheap in the war-torn regions of the Middle East with their tangled religious and historical conflicts. Yet some evangelical organizations still insist on going to the region for missionary and volunteer work. They should abandon such plans.

Korean hostages get reprieve

IDNUMBER 200707270084

PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A9

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Chung Sung-Jun, Getty Images / PLEAS AND PRAYERS:South Koreans attended a candlelight vigil in Seoul Thursday for the safe return of the South Koreans kidnapped in Afghanistan. Afghan police have already discovered the bullet-riddled body of a male hostage, one of 23 South Koreans kidnapped by the Taliban last week. ;

DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan

SOURCE: Agence France-Presse

WORD COUNT: 315

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – Taliban militants extended until noon today the deadline to negotiate the release of 22 kidnapped South Koreans, as an envoy headed to Afghanistan to spearhead efforts to free them.

The moves came as one of the hostages made an emotional plea for help in a telephone interview with a U.S. television network. The Taliban said the captives had been spared death under an earlier "final" deadline.

The militants agreed to the new deadline following a request from the Afghan government, Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi told AFP from an unknown location.

"The deputy interior minister asked us to give them extra time to be able to handle the issue. The Taliban leading council decided to give them time until tomorrow (Friday) noon," Ahmadi said.

The head of the Afghan government delegation negotiating the release of the South Koreans also confirmed the new timings.

"We managed to extend the deadline ... We are trying with all of our ability to win the safe and sound release of the South Koreans," said Waheedullah Mujadadi.

The extension comes after the "final" deadline set by the Taliban for a prisoner swap for the hostages passed Wednesday.

The Taliban said the 22 South Korean Christians were still alive following the discovery of the bullet-riddled body of their leader in a desert area on Wednesday.

"Since the last deadline no more Koreans have been killed," Ahmadi said.

Meanwhile, a South Korean hostage held by the militants begged for help in a telephone interview with CBS News, the network reported on its website Thursday.

"We are in a very difficult time. Please help us," said the woman, whom CBS said gave her name as Yo Cyun-ju.

"We are all pleading for you to help us get out of here as soon as possible. Really, we beg you."

The network said that Yo spoke to the network Wednesday when an interview was arranged with a Taliban commander.

"All of us are sick and in very bad condition," she said, begging Seoul and the international community to make a deal with the Taliban to win their freedom.

She went on to describe her captivity as a "very difficult life every day," and "a very exhausting situation," CBS reported.

South Korea has identified the dead hostage as 42-year-old Bae Hyung-Kyu, a Presbyterian pastor and the head of the mostly female aid mission, which was reportedly in the country to provide free medical services.

Close call in Afghanistan; Suicide bomber attacks convoy Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant riding in

IDNUMBER 200707270047
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: C1 / FRONT
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: CanWest News Service file / Brig.-Gen. TimGrant ;
BYLINE: Richard Foot
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 351

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, had a close encounter with the Taliban insurgency Thursday when a suicide bomber attacked the convoy he was riding in outside Kandahar city.

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UNDUE RISKS

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Canada has no helicopters of its own in Kandahar and relies on its Dutch, U.S. and other NATO allies for the use of helicopters when it needs them.

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Kandahar airfield is frequented by plainclothes Afghan civilians who are contracted to work there, or who drive supply trucks in and out of the base.

It would not be impossible for someone inside the base, or watching its gates, to notify insurgents that a senior Canadian officer was heading out on patrol.

A year will make All the difference

IDNUMBER 200707270059
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
BYLINE: Bob Bergen
SOURCE: Citizen Special
WORD COUNT: 777

It's time Canadians stopped focusing solely on 2009 as a possible date for Canadian troop withdrawals from Afghanistan and started thinking about the end of 2010.

That is because there is a very serious gap in the thinking of those who would pull the Canadian Forces out of Afghanistan in February 2009 or, in the case of the New Democratic Party, right now.

They ignore the fact that Canada pledged its full support for the Afghanistan Compact, a 2006 agreement between the Afghanistan government and the international community represented by more than 60 states and intergovernmental organizations, to help rebuild the war-ravaged country.

Ingrained like a watermark throughout the compact and related documents is the timeline date "end-2010."

End-2010 is the date by which the Afghan government, with the help of the international community, is committed to achieve its benchmark of 70,000 fully-trained and equipped Afghan National Army troops capable of meeting Afghanistan's security needs.

End-2010 is the date by which it is committed to achieving the benchmark of 62,000 fully constituted and professional Afghan National Police and Afghan Border Police.

End-2010 is the date by which it is committed to achieving its stated counter-narcotics capacity benchmarks; mine-action and ammunition-reduction targets; public-administration reform, rule-of-law frameworks and human-rights obligations; air transport, energy, and water resource management; urban development; primary, secondary and higher-education goals; health and nutrition benchmarks; and plans for agriculture and rural development and poverty reduction; and on, and on, and on in order to rebuild Afghanistan's society.

A remarkable string of success stories is found in the compact's Joint Co-ordination and Monitoring Board's first annual, but little-noticed, progress report released in May, indicating long strides toward those goals.

The Afghan National Army, which is key to the country's security, is well on its way to its benchmark of 70,000 troops with a strength of 37,015, an additional 12,044 in training, and recruiting of 8,208 personnel annually on track for 2010.

As of March this year, the Afghan National and Border Police numbered 62,200, with the intention of raising its number to 82,000, which is beyond the 2010 stated goal.

Since March 2006, stockpiles of 481,000 anti-personnel landmines had been located and destroyed, 132,080,792 square metres of land had been cleared and more than one million pieces of unexploded

ordinance had been destroyed.

On the social side, there were 5.4 million students enrolled in schools, 35 per cent of whom are girls; 82 per cent of Afghans had access to the basic package of health services and 6,121 community development councils had been established. In terms of infrastructure, 84 per cent of Afghanistan's 2,818 kilometres of ring-road network is open, with 59 per cent paved.

That is just one year into the Afghan Compact process, and there are simply too many success stories documented in the pages of the compact's progress report to list here, but, as the report points out, numbers alone don't tell the whole tale.

The compact's goal itself is: "to improve the lives of Afghan people and to contribute to national, regional and global peace and security."

Obviously, the picture in Afghanistan is not all rosy, and difficult challenges lie ahead. For example, a record number of poppy fields were eradicated, but poppy cultivation increased by 50 per cent and raw opium by 40 per cent, fuelling a corrupt narco-economy.

While the police have reached their recruiting benchmark, they remain largely corrupt and their loyalty is in question.

And, thanks to Pakistan's internal woes, the Taliban and al-Qaeda have been able to reconstitute and retrain in its lawless tribal areas bordering southern Afghanistan, where the Canadians operate.

What does the Afghanistan Compact's 2010 benchmark mean for Canada? Only time will tell. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government sought and received a parliamentary mandate to extend the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan only until February 2009.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion says the Liberals now will not support keeping Canadians in Afghanistan past 2009.

But the Harper government's decision to put the mission's extension to a vote was far more than Paul Martin's Liberal government did when it unilaterally deployed the Canadian Forces to Afghanistan to fight the remnants of al-Qaeda and the Taliban alongside the Americans in October 2001.

Parliament's committee on national defence has recommended a parliamentary debate be held in 2008 on whether the mission should be extended past February 2009.

That debate is sorely needed because I think it would reveal that the Liberals have a moral obligation to help Stephen Harper's government finish what the Liberals themselves helped start, in light of the new successes documented in the compact's progress report.

As for the NDP, they would turn their backs on NATO and the Afghan government's achievements, pull out now, and abandon Afghanistan to the Taliban, who recently kidnapped 23 South Korean medical services volunteers and killed one of them, demanding that imprisoned militants be freed.

Choosing between clear progress and Taliban-inspired anarchy, one would think, would be an easy choice.

Bob Bergen is a research fellow with the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute (CDFAI) in Calgary, www.cdfai.org.

War critic questions Defence surveillance; DND kept tabs on left-wing analyst, planned counter views to his speeches

IDNUMBER 200707270019

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Bruno Schlumberger, The Ottawa Citizen / Steve Staples, director of the Ottawa-based Rideau Institute on International Affairs, wants Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor to explain why he is being monitored. ;

BYLINE: David Pugliese

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen

WORD COUNT: 722

An analyst who has spoken out against the war in Afghanistan and has criticized Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier, is demanding an explanation from Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor on why officers kept tabs on him and made plans to counter his views of the mission in public.

At least one Defence department document detailing a speech by left-wing analyst Steve Staples last year was e-mailed to 50 officers, including two brigadier generals. The document points out Mr. Staples has "his own agenda" and will appear at other venues across the country. The military should be aware of what he is saying so they can be better prepared to counter his arguments, according to the e-mail.

But Mr. Staples argues it's not the job of the military to track his views and come up with counter-arguments. He is writing Mr. O'Connor for an explanation on what is going on, and about whether such efforts are continuing.

"I want some kind of accounting from O'Connor of why this is happening and why they tried to hide it in the first place," said Mr. Staples, director of the Ottawa-based Rideau Institute on International Affairs. "Why am I being monitored, and does the minister's office condone this?"

Mr. O'Connor's office says it has no information on the issue.

Defence spokesman Lt.-Col. Jamie Robertson, however, categorically denied that Mr. Staples is being monitored. He said military officials don't get involved in politics, but the department's public affairs office has the job to determine what is being said in the public domain.

"If there's misinformation in what's being said, our job is to inform Canadians (of what) the mission to Afghanistan consists of," Lt.-Col. Robertson said.

After being tipped off that a military officer had attended Mr. Staples' Jan. 26, 2006 presentation in Halifax, the Citizen requested, under the Access to Information law, all documents discussing public speeches in the city between Jan. 15 and Jan. 30, 2006. Department officials claimed they did "a thorough and complete search," and that no such records could be found. A source, however, forwarded copies of military documents discussing Mr. Staples and other speeches to be given in Halifax. Those records had been inadvertently left

War critic questions Defence surveillance; DND kept tabs on left-wing analyst, planned counter views to his speeches

behind at Mr. Staples' speech by the officer assigned to attend the function and write up a report on the analyst's views.

It was only after the Citizen turned those records over to the Information Commissioner for an investigation that the Defence department acknowledged records existed. It took almost a year for the department to release the documents.

But Lt.-Col. Robertson emphasized there was no attempt to hide any of the records. "The implication that people are sitting on stuff and trying to mislead is not accurate," he said.

Lt.-Col. Robertson pointed out the department released a key e-mail regarding Mr. Staples, even though it was technically outside the scope of the Citizen's Access request. That e-mail, a 1,000-word document detailing Mr. Staples' views and a recommendation on what should be done about them, was dated Jan. 31, 2006. The Citizen had requested records up to Jan. 30.

But lawyer and Access to Information specialist Michel Drapeau said what happened to Mr. Staples is not right. "Is there something illegal here? Not really, but it's the impropriety of having an officer on the public payroll doing fundamentally what could be seen by some as a surveillance operation," said Mr. Drapeau, a retired colonel and author of a law book on the Access to Information Act. "It's something that doesn't seem right for an officer to do."

He said there have been other incidents in which the department has claimed records don't exist, only to have them turn up when investigators from the Information Commissioner are called in. That, Mr. Drapeau said, should make people suspicious about what is happening with the documents.

The Defence records on Mr. Staples has opened the debate on to what extent Canadians can publicly challenge the military and government about the war in Afghanistan. Some military officers have privately told the Citizen that Mr. Staples shouldn't be allowed to raise dissenting views at a time of war. One former soldier is now circulating an e-mail that calls Mr. Staples a traitor.

Mr. Staples has questioned what he sees is a move by Gen. Hillier to push the military away from peacekeeping and into more combat-oriented roles.

Forces commander survives Afghan blast

IDNUMBER 200707270018
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Brian Hutchinson, Canwest News Service / Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant is nearing the end of a nine-month tour of duty. ;
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 209

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's top commander in Afghanistan, had a close call yesterday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Brig.-Gen. Grant, who escaped injury, was in one of three vehicles in a convoy when a minivan full of explosives approached at around 5:30 p.m. Afghan time.

The blast was powerful enough to toss a Canadian RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle onto its side. The soldiers inside did not sustain any injuries, according to the news reports. Brig.-Gen. Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over. The commander is just days away from finishing his nine-month tour.

The incident occurred about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base in Kandahar City on a main road that links the base with downtown Kandahar. The road was closed following the blast and a response team was sent to secure the area, news reports say.

Earlier in the day in a separate incident, a British soldier was killed during a battle with Taliban insurgents in southern Afghanistan, where Canadian troops are also stationed.

About 2,500 Canadian troops are serving in Afghanistan. Sixty-six Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed in the war-torn country.

On July 4, six Canadian soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb hit their vehicle — also an RG-31, which is considered one of the Canada's safest military vehicles.

BOMB ATTACK FAILS TO HIT TOP SOLDIER; Kandahar City Convoy

IDNUMBER 200707270159

PUBLICATION: National Post

DATE: 2007.07.27

EDITION: National

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Brian Hutchinson, National Post /Brigadier-General Tim Grant is seen in Kandahar, Afghanistan, last December. Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, narrowly missed being killed by a suicide bomber yesterday. ;

BYLINE: Richard Foot

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 595

Brigadier-General Tim Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, had a close encounter with the Taliban yesterday when a suicide bomber attacked the convoy he was riding in outside Kandahar city.

Brig.-Gen. Grant, whose nine-month tour of duty as commander of Canadian forces in Kandahar is only days from ending, was not hurt in the attack. Nor were any other Canadian soldiers.

The Brigadier-General was riding in a small convoy on the busy main road between Kandahar City and the nearby NATO air base where the majority of Canadian troops are stationed.

Military officials said a suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the convoy at about 5:30 p.m., setting off a large explosion that failed to kill or injure anyone except the bomber, but which left a Canadian RG-31 Nyala, a large armoured troop carrier, lying on its side in a ditch next to the highway.

Brig.-Gen. Grant declined to discuss the incident upon his return to the base. Defence officials in Ottawa were also saying little, except to confirm that the commander was not in the vehicle that was attacked.

A spokesman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said the Minister was "carefully following the incident."

Brig.-Gen. Grant has commanded roughly 2,500 troops in Kandahar through one of the deadliest periods of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

Sixty-seven Canadians have died there since 2002, including 22 soldiers in 2007 alone. Brig.-Gen. Grant has overseen the repatriation of the remains of 19 Canadians killed this year by suicide attackers and roadside bombs.

Canadian officers have warned that their troops face undue risks because they must travel the country and resupply their forward operating bases using land-based convoys rather than helicopters.

"It is quite possible [the lack of transport helicopters] has cost limbs, if not more, because we have had to sustain [troops in remote bases, using vehicles] on the ground," said Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Hope, the former commander of the Canadian battle group, in an interview with CanWest News Service last summer. "That has

produced a risk that would be reduced if we could take helicopter flights. It does not take a military tactician to know this."

Canada has no helicopters of its own in Kandahar and relies on its Dutch, U.S. and other NATO allies for the use of helicopters when it needs them.

Some of the Chinook heavy-lift helicopters used by the Dutch in Kandahar were sold to Holland by Canada in the 1980s by the government of former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney.

Partly in response to its lack of air capabilities in Afghanistan, Canada recently ordered a fleet of its own Chinooks. These are not, however, expected to arrive for several more years.

A Defence Department spokesman said yesterday that Canadian commanders "have access to a number of transportation options" in Afghanistan, although he would not elaborate.

Brig.-Gen. Grant and his predecessor, Brigadier-General David Fraser, have flown on NATO helicopters for various purposes in southern Afghanistan, although it is not clear how frequently foreign aircraft are made available.

The more difficult question raised by yesterday's attack is whether insurgents are trying to track the movements of Canadian commanders in the hopes of killing them.

Kandahar airfield is frequented by plainclothes Afghan civilians who are contracted to work there, or who drive supply trucks in and out of the base. It would not be impossible for someone inside the base, or watching its gates, to notify insurgents that a senior Canadian officer was heading out on patrol.

In the spring of 2006, several Canadian members of Brig.-Gen. Fraser's permanent "close-protection" team were killed in a roadside bomb attack on their convoy north of Kandahar. Brig.-Gen. Fraser was not with the squad at the time.

Elsewhere in southern Afghanistan yesterday, the insurgency continued to claim lives, with one British soldier dying in clashes with the Taliban.

KEYWORDS: WAR

INSIDE INFORMATION Your guide to today's Globe

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072080278

DATE: 2007.07.27

PAGE: A2

BYLINE: LARRY CORNIES

SECTION: News Index

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 363

WORD COUNT: 391

LARRY CORNIES Discerning direction in Afghanistan The Prime Minister's deference to Parliament gives Canadians a say.

Stephen Harper is a democrat who has opened the doors to a national dialogue on how the country should move forward in Afghanistan, writes Senator Hugh Segal. And the options are more varied than whether to stay or go.

COMMENT, A15 Cellphones, Internet dominating telecom The humble and once-ubiquitous home telephone has become the industry's poor cousin.

Nearly half of the money Canadians spend on telecommunications is going to pay their Internet and cellphone bills, leaving the home phone – once the industry's mainstay – to occupy slightly more than a quarter of the spending pie. The other declining category: long distance.

REPORT ON BUSINESS, B4 Pot use may cause more than munchies Research shows cannabis users are more likely than others to become psychotic.

A report in a prestigious British research journal shows that frequent (daily or weekly) marijuana users are at increased risk, later in life, of developing schizophrenia and other psychoses.

Young people should be warned, editors of The Lancet conclude.

LIFE, L1 Palatable alternative to the Simpsons If you're after something more substantial than doughnuts, wait in line for No Reservations.

Homer and his cartoonish family are sure to dominate the weekend box office, but the latest offering from director Scott Hicks stars alpha-female Catherine Zeta-Jones in a role that provides her with some breadth. No Reservations is a passable romantic comedy, writes reviewer Liam Lacey, about a woman obsessed with her work, forced to deal with the intervention of fate in her restaurant-centric world.

REVIEW, R9 Workplace managers face wall of disdain It's nothing personal, mind you, but employees generally dislike their bosses.

The art of leadership is as complex as the business itself, and successfully managing workplace relationships is a skill set as elusive as the coffee break. We provide some insight into what workers are thinking (and why) and what managers can do to improve.

CAREERS, C1 What's your view on marijuana use? Take our online poll: New medical evidence ties marijuana use to an increased risk of psychosis. Are you worried? GLOBEANDMAIL.COM

THE AFGHAN MISSION: SUICIDE BOMBER NARROWLY MISSES MILITARY COMMANDER'S VEHICLE Close call for top Canadian in Kandahar

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072080275

DATE: 2007.07.27

PAGE: A1 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: PAUL KORING

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORDS: 681

WORD COUNT: 640

PAUL KORING KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN A suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden van into a convoy carrying Canada's top military commander, Brigadier-General Tim Grant, in Afghanistan yesterday.

After the huge blast, one armoured vehicle lay on its side off the road, but it remains uncertain whether it had been rammed by the suicide bomber or whether the driver managed to avoid the attack and then the top-heavy vehicle toppled as it hit the ditch.

Gen. Grant was unhurt. He was travelling in another vehicle. No other Canadians or Afghans passersby were injured.

The attack on the heavily travelled and closely patrolled main road between the sprawling NATO base at Kandahar airfield and the city that was once the Taliban capital underscored the grave risks still posed by the militants who remain capable of striking in daylight within a few kilometres of major military bases or in city centres.

The suicide bomber in the minivan struck about 6 p.m., according to a Canadian military spokesman.

The highway was closed, a rapid-reaction force secured the area and the damaged vehicle was recovered.

Unlike most commanders in Afghanistan, Gen. Grant routinely travels as his soldiers do in armoured vehicles vulnerable to roadside bombs and suicide blasts by Islamic extremists seeking martyrdom.

Canada is the only country with a major fighting force in Afghanistan that has no helicopters deployed with its troops. It relies on British, Dutch and U.S. helicopters to evacuate its wounded, transport soldiers to remote outposts and, on rare occasions such as when Prime Minister Stephen Harper visits, transport high-value targets. U.S. Blackhawks flew Mr. Harper during his visit. Cabinet ministers usually get the same.

In April of 2006, Canadian General David Fraser, then commander of all NATO troops in southern Afghanistan, opted to fly back to Kandahar in a helicopter after a visit to Gumbad. His personal protection squad drove back in a light-armoured jeep and were among four soldiers killed by a roadside bomb.

Although scarce helicopters are assigned depending on need – and, according to NATO policy, are not reserved for the troops of any specific country – the reality is that the Canadian contingent has to request

THE AFGHAN MISSION: SUICIDE BOMBER NARROWLY MISSES MILITARY COMMANDER'S VEHICLE

helicopters and thus avoids doing so unless the need is critical.

Demands on the heavily used fleets of helicopters have become even more intense this year as the pace of operations has increased.

Aside from critical needs, like evacuating the injured, the Canadian contingent uses helicopters less often than any of the other major fighting countries in the south.

"I used to fly all the time when I first got here," Gen. Grant said earlier this week. "I don't fly anywhere any more." Canada has no helicopters capable of operating in the harsh, hot, high-altitude conditions of Afghanistan, and the British, Dutch and U.S. helicopters based at Kandahar airfield are in huge demand.

Gen. Grant's use of armoured vehicles to get around Canada's sprawling area of operations in remote and rugged Kandahar province, apparently a deliberate choice, gives him a much greater exposure to the risks that ordinary Canadian soldiers face daily. Now only days away from ending his nine-month tour in Afghanistan, he joked earlier this week about the long hours he spends in armoured vehicles. "I catch up on my sleep," he said.

The general also acknowledged that improvised explosive devices remain the gravest threat to Canadian soldiers. Bombs buried beneath roads or hidden alongside them, or packed into cars and driven into military vehicles, have killed most of the 66 Canadians lost in Afghanistan.

Earlier this month, in one of the biggest blasts ever seen in Afghanistan, an RG-31 Nyala was destroyed, killing all six Canadians and an Afghan interpreter inside. The vehicle, developed in South Africa, is widely regarded as the least vulnerable of Canadian fighting vehicles in Afghanistan.

IEDs are "a serious threat," Gen. Grant said earlier this week.

He said new surveillance and detection techniques were continually being introduced but warned that "in all likelihood, we will not be able to reduce that threat to zero."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Kandahar, Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: strife; bombs; defence; helicopters

PERSONAL NAME: Tim Grant

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

THE AFGHAN MISSION: SUICIDE BOMBER NARROWLY MISSES MILITARY COMMANDER'S VEHICLE

AFGHANISTAN Unclear demands hinder hostage negotiations South Korean captives plead for help on TV: 'All of us are sick and in very bad condition'

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PAGE: A11 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: AMIR SHAH

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: AP AFP

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

WORDS: 731

WORD COUNT: 683

AMIR SHAH Associated Press, with a report from AFP KABUL, AFGHANISTAN Afghan clerics and tribal elders are negotiating for the release of 22 South Korean hostages, who a Taliban spokesman said yesterday have been split into small groups and are being fed bread, yogurt and rice a week after their capture.

A local police chief said the talks have been difficult because the Taliban's demands are unclear.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. "They have got problems among themselves." The Taliban reiterated their demand that jailed militants be freed in exchange for the captives, and set the latest of several deadlines, midday today, threatening to kill more hostages if the condition is not met.

One of the hostages begged for help in an interview reported by U.S. television yesterday.

"We are in a very difficult time. Please help us," said the woman, who told CBS television her name was Yo Cyun-ju. "We are all pleading for you to help us get out of here as soon as possible. Really, we beg you," she said in comments posted on the network's website.

CBS said it spoke to Ms. Yo late Wednesday, after an interview was arranged with a Taliban commander. She spoke in Korean and an Afghan dialect of Farsi, CBS added.

"All of us are sick and in very bad condition," she said, begging the South Korean government and the international community to make a deal with the Taliban. She went on to describe her captivity as a "very difficult life every day," and "a very exhausting situation," CBS reported.

A South Korean envoy was headed to Afghanistan yesterday to consult with top Afghan officials on how to secure the release of the remaining captives. The kidnappers "will be held accountable for taking the life of a Korean citizen," Baek Jong-chun, South Korea's chief presidential secretary for security affairs, said in a statement before departing.

One of the original group of 23 abducted Koreans, a 42-year-old pastor, was found slain with multiple gunshot wounds Wednesday.

AFGHANISTAN Unclear demands hinder hostage negotiations South Korean captives plead for help on TV: 'All of us are sick and in very bad condition'

Authorities recovered the body of Bae Hyung-kyu in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province, where the South Koreans were seized on July 19.

An official at the South Korean embassy in Kabul said authorities were arranging to repatriate the body.

His mother, 68-year-old Lee Chang-suk, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Relatives of other abductees, meanwhile, appealed anew for their relatives' release.

"We hope the negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban go well," said Kim Kyung-ja, mother of hostage Lee Sun-young. "Please send our lovely children home." Cha Sung-min, 31, whose 32-year-old sister Cha Hye-jin is being held, said the families are struggling.

"After hearing the sad news, yesterday was a very difficult day," Mr. Cha said. "We believe the best way right now is to trust our government." Local tribal elders and religious clerics who are respected among the people of Qarabagh district, where the Taliban kidnapped the South Koreans, have been conducting negotiations with the captors for several days.

The negotiations have been held over the telephone, said Ghazni police chief Ali Shah Ahmadzai.

"We will not use force against the militants to free the hostages," Mr. Ahmadzai said. "The best way in this case is dialogue." Qari Yousef Ahmadi, who claims to speak for the hard-line Islamist Taliban, said they had been contacted by Afghanistan's deputy interior minister, Major-General Muhammad Munir Mangal, who said the government would make a decision regarding the militants' demands by noon today.

"If Kabul administration does not solve our problem . . . then we do not have any option but to kill Korean hostages," Mr. Ahmadi said.

"The Taliban are not asking for money. We just want to exchange our prisoners for Korean hostages. . . . When they release the Taliban, we will release the hostages," Mr. Ahmadi said by phone from an undisclosed location.

Mr. Ahmadi said the 22 hostages were being held in small groups in different locations and were being fed "no burgers . . . but the same food that our villagers have – bread, yogurt, rice."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; kidnapping; south koreans; murder; hostages

PERSONAL NAME: Bae Hyung-kyu

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

TROOP SUPPORT Analysts debate the options

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

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DATE: 2007.07.27

PAGE: A11

BYLINE: TIM SHUFELT

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 230

WORD COUNT: 212

TIM SHUFELT The suicide-bomb attack that narrowly missed Canada's top commander in Afghanistan, Brigadier-General Tim Grant, has some calling for the need for Canadian helicopters.

The Canadian military has no helicopters of its own there, and ground attacks pose the greatest threat to Canadian troops, Brig.-Gen.

Grant said.

Military historian Jack Granatstein said, "There's no argument that we need helicopters under our own control, rather than line up with Dutch, British, American, etc. The government, by ordering Chinooks, has recognized that. But the problem is they won't come on stream for a while." The federal government has a \$4.7-billion contract with Boeing for 16 Chinook helicopters to be ready by 2011.

Liberal foreign affairs critic Ujjal Dosanjh acknowledged that it takes time to build helicopters, but said Canadian troops need the unconditional support of their government.

"Our military, when we've sent them into harm's way, we should provide them with whatever they require." That's not to say that helicopters can guarantee safe travel.

"You can fly at 20,000 feet, but they know you got to land," said Scott Taylor, a military veteran and analyst.

A safer option would be a mix of ground and air travel, both analysts said. Relying too heavily on helicopters could ultimately pose new risks as the skies would remain relatively safe for only so long.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: defence; helicopters; strife; bombs; security; political

PERSONAL NAME: Tim Grant

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

SOUTH KOREA SENDS ENVOY TO AFGHANISTAN IN BID TO FREE CAPTIVES

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PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: National
SECTION: World
PAGE: A11
COLUMN: World Report
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: / (See hardcopy for Photo Description);
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 211

GHAZNI, Afghanistan –South Korea sent a senior envoy to Afghanistan yesterday to step up efforts to free 22 Christian volunteers held hostage by the Taliban after rebels killed the leader of the church group, Bae Hyung-kyu, pictured, who turned 42 on the day he was killed. A Taliban spokesman said the remaining hostages were unharmed, despite the passing of a deadline overnight. Seoul despatched Baek Jong-chun, its chief presidential national security advisor, to boost co-ordination with the Afghan government in negotiations to free the Koreans. He is expected to arrive in Afghanistan today, which could mean the Taliban may wait till at least then to see what offer, if any, he brings. The hostages, including 18 women, were abducted from a bus in Ghazni province last week. Mirajuddin Pathan, Ghazni's Governor, urged the Taliban to at least free the women. "Keeping women as captives has not happened in Afghanistan's history. They should release the women," he said, adding the Taliban had given the Afghan government a list of prisoners they wanted freed as part of an exchange.

KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; FOREIGN AID; AFGHANISTAN

Memo to CBC: They are terrorists, not militants

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PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: National
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A13
BYLINE: Roger Jones
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 82

Re: Taliban Kill South Korean Hostage, July 26.

The CBC does it again. During a segment on the Korean hostage crisis on The National, a reporter said, "Militants kill South Korean hostage in Afghanistan." The show's host, Peter Mansbridge, made no attempt to correct her.

These animals are not "militants," they are not even "combatants." They murdered a Korean student in cold blood. That makes them murderous terrorists by any reasonable definition. How do we stop the nonsensical misinformation coming from our national broadcaster?

Roger Jones, Thornhill, Ont.

KEYWORDS: 0

A model for 'the long war'; Five Years After The Bali Bombing, Southeast Asia's Leaders Are Winning The War On Terror. Joshua Kurlantzick Explains How They've Done It; Joshua Kurlantzick

IDNUMBER 200707270118

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EDITION: National

SECTION: Issues & Ideas

PAGE: A15

ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Dwi Oblo, Reuters / An Indonesian militant is escorted by members of the country's elite anti-terrorist unit in Yogyakarta, Central Java, last month. ;

SOURCE: National Post

WORD COUNT: 1778

In October, 2002, Islamic radicals set off two powerful bombs on the Indonesian island of Bali. Detonated in the heart of the tourist district, they obliterated several bars and nightclubs, killing over 200 people. It was the worst terrorist attack in the country's history. Shocked and taken aback by the carnage, the international media proclaimed the end of innocence for the tropical retreat.

To anyone who had been paying attention to political developments in Southeast Asia, however, the surprise was misplaced. Well before the Bali bombing, Islamists had turned the region into a front in their global jihad. In the Philippines, the radical group Abu Sayyaf, which allegedly received funding from the brother-in-law of Osama bin Laden, had built itself into a powerfully lethal force. In Indonesia, an even deadlier terror group, Jemaah Islamiah (JI), had also expanded, bombing churches and ultimately putting in motion the Bali plot.

But even after 9/11 and the Bali bombing, the governments of Southeast Asia did little. Indonesia's then-vice president, Hamzah Haz, actually celebrated the 9/11 attacks, announcing his hope that they would help "cleanse America of its sins." The country's president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, barely responded to the carnage in Bali. In the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia, governments similarly dithered.

Yet today, less than five years after the attack on Bali, the situation in Southeast Asia has changed dramatically. Across the region, jihadist groups are struggling to survive, Islamist parties seem to be weakening and the region's newest leaders openly wage war on terror. Indeed, Southeast Asia is proving to be a model for the "long war" against Islamist terror.

Veterans of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan founded Abu Sayyaf in the impoverished southern Philippines in the early 1990's. The group grew quickly in that Muslim-majority region, operating in areas that featured minimal law enforcement. In the course of the decade, its numbers expanded from a few hundred fighters to as many as 5,000.

Abu Sayyaf announced its new strength in acts of escalating brutality. In 2001, after a string of kidnappings, the group killed one of its captives with a machete. In 2004, it bombed a Philippine ferry, killing over 100 people. During its early years, members of Abu Sayyaf escaped the Philippine military by retreating to the interior of the southern island of Jolo. Elements in the corrupt, underpaid Philippine military reportedly sold weapons to Abu Sayyaf and took bribes from the group to let it flee.

The Philippine government proved as inept as the army. Manila failed to pursue a coherent policy, instead alternating between announced crackdowns in the south and attempts to negotiate deals.

In Indonesia, the situation five years ago seemed even grimmer. In the late 1990's, Islamist groups had taken advantage of the country's political turbulence to build terror cells and promote radical Islam across the archipelago. Indonesians historically had favoured a tolerant, Sufi-influenced version of Islam. But JI and other Islamists began to strike out at these local traditions. Funded partly by supporters in the Persian Gulf, they began to set up networks of boarding schools across the country. JI's charismatic intellectual leader, Abu Bakar Bashir, traveled throughout Indonesia preaching jihad.

With a growing pool of potential recruits, JI started mounting increasingly sophisticated terror operations. On Christmas Eve in 2000, the group orchestrated the bombing of over 30 churches. The attack in Bali two years later, the region's first suicide bombing, introduced the jihadist tactics of the Middle East. In 2003, JI struck at the heart of Indonesian power, bombing a Marriott hotel in central Jakarta. Soon after, militants bombed the Australian embassy.

Even after these audacious attacks, the government of President Megawati Sukarnoputri vacillated. Indonesian officials refused to admit extremists threatened their nation. As for the Indonesian armed forces, they proved as corrupt as their Philippine counterparts. The regional trend was unmistakable: A study by the Rand Corporation found that the number of terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia and Oceania had grown from 95 in the period 1968–1985 to over 2,000 between 1986 and 2004.

But then, things changed. And in the last few years, the region has served up several important success stories.

This past January, on the southern Philippine island of Jolo, special-forces units of the national army hiked into the thickly forested interior. Relying on intelligence from advisors provided by U.S. special forces and on tips from locals, the soldiers surrounded leaders of Abu Sayyaf and proceeded to blast their mountain hideouts. By the end of the month, nearly all of Abu Sayyaf's commanders had been killed.

In neighbouring Indonesia and Malaysia, security forces have made similar gains. In late 2005, members of an elite Indonesian police unit stormed a small house in the city of Malang. Inside were three key JI bombmakers, including a mastermind of the deadly attack in Bali. Last month, the group suffered yet another blow when Indonesian national police captured both the alleged head of JI's military wing, Abu Dujana, and the organization's alleged acting leader, a man known variously as Zarkasih, Nuaim, Sharoni, Zainuddin and Abu Irsyad,

These victories capped an aggressive counterterrorism campaign waged over the past two years by the governments of the region with the active support of the United States. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, elected president of Indonesia in 2004, agreed early on that his country faced a serious threat and needed help. With assistance from Malaysia, Australia and the Philippines, his government tracked the Bali bombers and other JI members. Indonesian police captured over 200 suspected terrorists, and their counterparts in Malaysia have made key follow-up arrests.

Co-operation has proceeded on several fronts. Regional governments have formalized their commitment to counterterrorism — and to working with the U.S. on the problem — by creating a joint counterterrorism centre located in Malaysia.

No less important, Southeast Asian nations have begun to mount an open challenge to Islamist schools and political parties. In Indonesia, President Yudhoyono has proved to be a strong voice for secularism, thus weakening the appeal of Muslim radicals. In order to emphasize the seriousness of the threat, his government has televised the videos of local suicide bombers and has recruited top Muslim clerics to issue public messages against the Islamists. Jakarta has even employed former terrorists to preach that violence has no

A model for 'the long war'; Five Years After The Bali Bombing, Southeast Asia's Leaders Are Winning The V

place in Islam.

Several factors combined to produce this turnaround. For one, the Islamists overplayed their hand. The wanton destruction of the Bali bombing, which not only killed dozens of locals but also ruined the fabled island's tourist economy, turned many Indonesians against JI. Abu Sayyaf's brutality had a similar effect in the Philippines.

In its own way, the December, 2004 tsunami also helped the counterterrorism fight. Among the tens of thousands of Indonesians killed by the tidal wave were fighters of Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), an Islamic insurgency in the province of Aceh, the part of the country hit hardest by the disaster. Forced from its hideouts, the leadership of GAM proved willing to enter a truce with the Indonesian government. Yudhoyono reciprocated, establishing peace talks that have resulted in elections in Aceh.

Direct military assistance also has been crucial. Here the U.S. wisely has chosen to play a behind-the-scenes role, dispatching advisers, communications technology, and weaponry. In the Philippine military's operation against Abu Sayyaf this past winter, U.S. advisors also helped the Philippine navy keep Abu Sayyaf blockaded on the island of Jolo. When it came time to announce the victory, however, the U.S. maintained a low profile, allowing Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to take the credit. In the eyes of the Philippine public, then, the campaign against Abu Sayyaf has remained a local operation.

In Indonesia, Washington helped to create a new 300-man elite counterterrorism force called Detachment 88, spending over US\$20-million on its training and equipment. It proved a good investment. Detachment 88 played a major role in dismantling JI's leadership and helped lead the investigations of the Bali and Marriott bombings.

Beyond helping to track and kill terrorists, Washington has promoted economic development in the region and has tried to assist in settling local conflicts that very often have taken on an Islamic cast. In the southern Philippines, the U.S. has built new classrooms, medical clinics, roads, wells and other social-welfare projects, spending over US\$250-million in aid since 2001.

There are important lessons to draw from all this: What the United States and its allies have done in the region might well be replicated elsewhere.

For one thing, in Southeast Asia the U.S. moved quickly to help local forces stand on their own; from the start, the struggle against Islamism was a genuinely collaborative effort. Southeast Asian politicians thus have been able to avoid charges of becoming American stooges.

As for direct assistance in fighting the terrorists, the lesson of Southeast Asia is to rely less on military establishments — which, as in Iraq, have proved to be unreliable and corrupt — than on specially trained forces such as Detachment 88, cordoned off from ordinary soldiers.

Equally important, Southeast Asia's elite units and police forces have won their victories through dogged investigative work, not by resorting to brutal interrogation techniques. With few reported incidents of abuse or torture, counterterrorism efforts in Southeast Asia continue to have a high standing in public opinion. By contrast, the more coercive tactics of, for example, the Mubarak government in Egypt have tarnished the war on terror and made it easier for Islamists to stir up rage against the U.S. and its Middle Eastern allies.

For all its differences with the struggle in the Middle East, the less-studied "second front" against Islamism, in Southeast Asia, shows that even short-term gains may be enough to silence those who claim that the fight is essentially unwinnable. The dramatic reversal that has taken place in the region in a few short years offers some hope that the dire conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq might yet be turned around. — Joshua Kurlantzick is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. A longer version of this article appeared

in the May, 2007, issue of Commentary magazine.

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KEYWORDS: COUP D'ETAT; PRESIDENTS; TERRORISM; KIDNAPPING; CRIME

AFGHANISTAN Considering our options Debate on the Afghan mission is an invitation, but a consensus doesn't mean all-party agreement

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BYLINE: HUGH SEGAL

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 714

WORD COUNT: 743

HUGH SEGAL Conservative Senator from Ontario Prime Minister Stephen Harper's declaration that a parliamentary consensus will be needed before committing Canadian troops to Afghanistan after 2009 is not a policy change. Mr. Harper has always said Parliament should be making important deployment decisions; his consistency on this and Senate reform is utterly coherent with his advocacy while in opposition.

For Canadian foreign policy, however, this kind of parliamentary say represents a substantial break with Privy Council Office and bureaucratic control. It is also a remarkable invitation for a broad and wide-ranging debate on our foreign and defence posture. For all Canadians who care, it is a rare opportunity to engage.

There are more options available to us in Afghanistan than simply staying or leaving. Our initial mission in support of a democratically elected government, operating under a consensual constitution and authorized by both the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was to assist with the country's stability, to support law and order, and to suppress terrorist insurgents. The direct Canadian security interest here is to ensure that Afghanistan is never again used as a staging base for the Taliban and al-Qaeda in attacks against targets in the Middle East, Asia, Europe or North America.

But we must also be careful to avoid "mission creep." While consolidating the Kabul administration's civic infrastructure in Afghanistan's southern provinces is certainly laudable, it is important that this mission not put us in a perpetual support role. Our commitments are real and sincere, but the notion that three to five more years of the same kind of military engagement after 2009 is the only way to assist is a little narrow – both for Canada and for NATO as a whole.

One need only look at the no-fly zones enforced over northern and southern Iraq after the 1991 Persian Gulf war to note the range of strategic choices available to the allies. We could follow through on our NATO obligations and serve the region by reducing ground forces, patrolling from the air in manned and unmanned aircraft, making full use of other surveillance capacities and offering support for allied naval containment and air rapid-response capacity. Nimble, easily deployed constant air surveillance and other tactical theatre options would ensure fewer risks for our convoys.

At some point, the political consolidation of the southern provinces bordering Pakistan, the fuller integration of Pashtun tribes into the government, the broadening of a workable co-operation with Pakistan and other neighbours must become an Afghan task. Canadian diplomatic, military and aid officials and field operations have been fully engaged with Kabul at all levels, but the precise same commitment cannot be expected to roll

on to the same extent forever.

This can be done in a way that does not diminish or understate the threats al-Qaeda and the Taliban pose to our national security.

As a supporter of our present engagement, my task is to advance our premise and listen to those contributed by others – as is the case for those who oppose it or wish to change it. I believe a continued streamlined NATO and Canadian military presence to be both essential and viable; others may disagree. But the Prime Minister has invited all Canadians to engage.

A parliamentary consensus is not the same as all-party agreement.

Conservatives need one other party to agree for any resolution to pass. Having more than one other party would be superb, but not essential.

In a minority situation, the government's burden is to both manage the affairs of state and sustain a working majority, issue by issue in the House. That may seem onerous, but the opposition parties, who can coalesce to force an election at any time, also have some careful balancing to do. In a minority Parliament, a wrong step by the opposition parties puts them in the same icy crevasse as the government.

Meanwhile, beyond the parliamentary sensitivities is the cold and profound fact that 67 Canadians have given their lives for this important commitment. Our duty to them, their mission, their loyalty, their sacrifice, cannot be set aside as we embrace the steps ahead.

Hugh Segal is senior fellow at the Queen's School of Policy Studies and chair of the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: foreign policy; defence; strife; political

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

Hostages aren't evangelicals

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072080228

DATE: 2007.07.27

PAGE: A14

BYLINE: HE BEOM KIM

SECTION: Letter to the Edit

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 108

WORD COUNT: 134

He Beom Kim director of public affairs, South Korean embassy Ottawa As the fate of many young lives hangs in the balance, you printed an article on your front page, Taliban Kill South Korean As Hostage Crisis Deepens (July 26), that painted the Korean hostages as evangelicals.

It is wrong to call them evangelicals, mainly because they did not enter the Islamic region to spread Christianity. Faith might be a common characteristic of the young imperilled Koreans, but it is not what these nurses and students hoped to share with the war-stricken Afghans.

They brought good intentions, honest love and good will. It is time that all of us should pray for the hostages to return safely home.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; hostages; kidnapping; south koreans

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

THE MILITARY An uneven power struggle

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072080198

DATE: 2007.07.27

PAGE: A14

BYLINE:

SECTION: Editorial

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 415

WORD COUNT: 377

It should not be left to Canada's top soldier to announce significant changes in Ottawa's approach to the nation's security. But there was General Rick Hillier, Chief of Defence Staff, this week casually shelving the Conservative government's election promise to create 14 new army reserve units. Meanwhile, his boss, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, was once again missing from the political action.

The apparent policy reversal popped up almost inadvertently as Gen.

Hillier discussed the Tory commitment to station the reserve territorial battalions, each with 100 regular troops and 400 reservists, as emergency response units in major urban centres across the country.

"We're not in the business of creating new reserve units," he told the CBC. "We have sufficient units. . . . We don't need new units." He added that the military has opted to revamp its existing reserve units to meet the spirit of that Conservative vow.

Given the demands on the Canadian forces in Afghanistan, where 900 reservists now serve, that is almost certainly the right approach.

But Mr. O'Connor should have announced the change. Instead, over the past 18 months, the line between political and military duties has blurred as the two men have brushed repeatedly and uneasily against each other.

Perhaps such clashes were inevitable, given their huge differences in management style and personality. Mr. O'Connor is not a strong minister. A former brigadier-general, he has not mastered the art of politics or the intricacies of such contentious files as the treatment of Afghan detainees. He has alienated the military with his tendency to blame underlings for his problems, rather than shoulder the responsibility as minister. Worse, because he cannot project warmth and eloquence, he has not managed to rally a nation that is effectively at war as domestic support for the mission flags.

In contrast, Gen. Hillier is a strong personality. Admired by his troops in the field, he has fought vehement behind-the-scenes battles on their behalf, securing extensive orders for new equipment.

Expansive and genial, he is a far abler politician than Mr. O'Connor.

He is an asset in the struggle to win domestic support. But without strong political oversight, he is apt to stray onto political turf.

Mr. O'Connor is apparently incapable of providing that oversight, leaving a vacuum for Gen. Hillier to fill.

It is hard to see how this unfortunate situation can be resolved without Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointing a new Minister of Defence.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: defence; policy; internal security; government; political

PERSONAL NAME: Rick Hillier; Gordon O'Connor

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

DIARY: SCOTT MONTGOMERY

IDNUMBER 200707270040
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: National
SECTION: Post Movies
PAGE: PM2
BYLINE: Scott Montgomery
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 432

This week's diarist is Scott Montgomery, a member of the Second City comedy troupe. The group's new show, Facebook of Revelations, opened last week in Toronto. Montgomery kept his diary during rehearsals.

I would like to beg an indulgence if I may. To all who are inclined to do so, please stop referring to comedy sketches and scenes as skits, even if you're being complimentary. I suppose this smacks of hair-splitting and snobbery of the highest order, but there is something about the word "skit" that conjures images of the last night at camp where delirious pre-teens "have a little fun" at the expense of their counsellors and then fall into a weepy reverie about how they'll never forget all the good times and great friends from the past summer. It's an ugly, sharp word. There's something vaguely condescending about it, as in "Oh, I loved your little skit about Afghanistan." Sketches I can live with, scenes I like, but skit? Barf!

Now that that's out of my system. ...It's the last day of rehearsal for the week, and I'm feeling uncharacteristically optimistic about the show. Whatever it amounts to, I must say that it has been a real joy to work with my current cast and director. The show is fun to do, a real consideration for a six-to-eight-month run, and the mood is decidedly upbeat. I've never found myself in this situation before. All of a sudden I'm scared. Are there unforeseen icebergs lurking in the dark, waiting to sink this happy ship? What if, dear God, it's not funny?

Ah, who knows and who cares. If the worst thing that someone can say to me is, "That wasn't funny," then I think I'm doing OK. The brilliant and tragically under-read writer Donald Barthelme once said that "not knowing" was critical to a work of art. He also wrote, "I could live without certainty; I would have liked to have had faith." Faith, as anyone alive in the world right now knows, can be very destructive when aimed in the wrong direction, but well-placed faith—in friends, colleagues and those we love and admire—is a springboard into that sublime unknown so essential to any endeavour worth its salt. So I guess the time has come to take the leap. Ready? Set? Go! – Next week's diarist is comedian Frank Spadone.

Read Robert Cushman's review of Facebook of Revelations in tomorrow's Toronto magazine.

KEYWORDS: 0

Convoy carrying top soldier attacked Canadian leader escapes injuries

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.07.27

PAGE: A19

SECTION: World Wire

WORD COUNT: 239

CNS BRIG.-GEN. Tim Grant, Canada's top commander in Afghanistan, had a close call on Thursday when a convoy he was travelling in was attacked by a suicide bomber.

Grant, who escaped injury, was in one of three vehicles in a convoy when a minivan full of explosives approached at around 5:30 p.m.

local time.

The blast was powerful enough to toss a Canadian RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle onto its side. The soldiers inside did not sustain any injuries, according to the news reports. Grant was not in the vehicle that flipped over.

The commander is just days away from finishing his nine-month tour in Afghanistan.

The incident occurred about 18 kilometres southeast of the Canadian base in Kandahar City on a main road that links the base with downtown Kandahar. The road was closed following the blast and a response team was sent to secure the area, news reports say.

Sixty-six Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed in that war-torn country.

On July 4, Six Canadian soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb hit their vehicle — also an RG-31, which is considered one of the Canada's safest military vehicles. The dead are Capt. Matthew Johnathan Dawe, Cpl. Cole Bartsch, Cpl. Jordan Anderson and Pte. Lane Watkins, all of 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, based in Edmonton, and Master-Cpl. Colin Bason, a reservist from The Royal Westminster Regiment and Capt. Jefferson Clifford Francis of 1 Royal Canadian Horse Artillery based in Shilo, Manitoba.

— CanWest News Service

Korean official seeks release of 22 hostages Travels to Afghanistan after one of the Christian volunteers killed

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DATE: 2007.07.27

PAGE: A19

SECTION: World Wire

WORD COUNT: 578

CP Wire Amir Shah KABUL, Afghanistan — A top South Korean official headed to Afghanistan on Thursday on a mission to secure the release of 22 Christian volunteers held captive by Taliban kidnappers after the militants killed a hostage.

A local police chief said negotiations with the Taliban captors have been difficult because their demands were unclear.

"One says, 'Let's exchange them for my relative,' the others say, 'Let's release the women,' and yet another wants a deal for money," said Khwaja Mohammad Sidiqi, police chief in Qarabagh. "They have got problems among themselves." After conflicting reports that possibly eight of the other hostages had been released, presidential spokesman Chun Ho-sun said the 22 South Koreans were still believed held but were not suffering health problems.

In new violence, U.S.-led coalition forces and Afghan troops fought two separate battles with militants in southern Afghanistan, killing more than 60 suspected Taliban insurgents. A NATO soldier was killed in another incident, officials said.

On Wednesday, authorities found the bullet-riddled body of 42-year-old Bae Hyung-kyu in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province, where the South Koreans were abducted July 19. Bae, a deputy pastor and a founder of Saemmul Presbyterian Church, was killed on his birthday, church officials said.

Bae was found with 10 bullet wounds in his head, chest and stomach, said Abdul Rahman, a police officer. Another police official, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the situation, said militants told him the hostage was sick and couldn't walk, and was therefore shot.

A church official confirmed that Bae previously had suffered from lung disease and was still taking medicine.

Bae's mother, 68-year-old Lee Chang-suk, broke into tears as she watched the televised government announcement of his death. "I never thought it possible," she said from the southern island of Jeju, according to Yonhap news agency.

The kidnappers "will be held accountable for taking the life of a Korean citizen," Baek Jong-chun, South Korea's chief presidential secretary for security affairs, said before leaving for Afghanistan.

Chun said South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun had spoken with his Afghan counterpart, Hamid Karzai, on the situation.

Qari Yousef Ahmadi, a purported Taliban spokesman, said all 22 hostages were fine but claimed Afghan authorities were not allowing South Korean officials to negotiate directly with his group.

Korean official seeks release of 22 hostages Travels to Afghanistan after one of the Christian volunteers killed

The hostages were being held in small groups in different locations, he said, and were being fed "the same food that our villagers have — bread, yogurt, rice." Ghazni Police Chief Ali Shah Ahmadzai said the Afghan negotiators were speaking with the Taliban over the phone.

"We will not use force against the militants to free the hostages," he said, adding he was hopeful about reaching "some sort of deal for the release of six up to eight people" later Thursday.

Marajudin Pathan, the governor of Ghazni province, said militants have given a list of eight Taliban prisoners who they want released in exchange for eight Koreans.

An Afghan official involved in the negotiations earlier said a large ransom would be paid to free eight hostages. The official also spoke on condition he not be identified, citing the matter's sensitivity. No other officials would confirm this account.

Foreign governments are suspected to have paid ransoms in Afghanistan in the past, but have either kept quiet or denied it.

The South Koreans, including 18 women, were kidnapped while on a bus trip through Ghazni province on the Kabul–Kandahar highway, Afghanistan's main thoroughfare.

Because of a recent spike in kidnappings, police announced that foreigners are no longer allowed to leave Kabul without their permission.

The South Korean church has stressed the abducted Koreans were not involved in any Christian missionary work, saying they provided only medical and other volunteer aid.

— Associated Press

S. Korean hostage pleads for help

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KEYWORDS: FOREIGN RELATIONS; FAMILY REUNIONS; NUCLEAR WEAPONS;
SUMMITCONFERENCES; KOREAN WAR
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
SOURCE: AFP
WORD COUNT: 189

A South Korean woman held hostage along with 21 fellow aid workers by Taliban militants begged for help during a phone interview, CBS television said yesterday.

"We are in a very difficult time. Please help us," said the woman, who told CBS her name was Yo Cyun-ju. "We are all pleading for you to help us get out of here as soon as possible. Really, we beg you," she said in comments posted on the network's website. She spoke in Korean and an Afghan dialect of Farsi.

The Taliban said yesterday the 22 South Korean Christians were still alive after the discovery of the bullet-riddled body of their leader Wednesday.

South Korea has identified the dead hostage as 42-year-old Bae Hyung-Kyu, a Presbyterian pastor and the head of the mostly female aid mission, which was reportedly in the country to provide free medical services.

Taliban militants extended until noon today the deadline to negotiate their release. A South Korean envoy headed to Afghanistan to spearhead efforts to free them.

The militants had demanded Seoul withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. South Korea responded by saying it would pull them out as previously scheduled by the end of the year.

Bomber attacks convoy

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DATE: 2007.07.27
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: MASSOUD HOSSAINI, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE VIA GETTYIMAGES / Afghan army and ISAF soldiers guard the site of a suicide attack in Kandahar yesterday. ;
KEYWORDS: BOMBINGS; SUICIDE
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 74

Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, Canada's highest-ranking soldier in Afghanistan, had a close encounter with the Taliban insurgency Thursday when a suicide bomber attacked the convoy he was riding in outside Kandahar city.

Grant, whose nine-month tour of duty as commander of Canadian forces in Kandahar is only days from ending, was not hurt in the attack. Nor were any other Canadian soldiers.

The blast was powerful enough to toss a Canadian RG-31 Nyala armoured vehicle onto its side.

Military critic says DND's keeping tabs; Analyst questions Afghan policy; Officer assigned to report on speeches

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KEYWORDS: RETAIL TRADE; OFFICE EQUIPMENT
DELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: DAVID PUGLIESE
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 468

An analyst who has spoken out against the war in Afghanistan as well as criticized Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier is demanding an explanation from Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor why officers kept tabs on him and made plans to counter his views of the mission in public.

At least one defence document detailing a speech by left-wing analyst Steve Staples last year was emailed to 50 officers, including two brigadier-generals.

The document states Staples has "his own agenda" and points out he will appear at other venues across the country. The military should be aware of what he is saying so it can be better prepared to counter his arguments, according to the email.

But Staples argues it's not the job of the military to track his views and come up with counter-arguments. He is writing O'Connor for an explanation of what is going on and whether such efforts are continuing.

"I want some kind of accounting from O'Connor of why this is happening and why they tried to hide it in the first place," said Staples, director of the Ottawa-based Rideau Institute on International Affairs. "Why am I being monitored and does the minister's office condone this?"

But O'Connor's office says it has no information on the issue.

Defence spokesperson Lt.-Col. Jamie Robertson categorically denied Staples is being monitored. He said military officials don't get involved in politics, but the department's public affairs office has the job of determining what is being said in public.

"If there's misinformation in what's being said, our job is to inform Canadians (of what) the mission to Afghanistan consists of," Robertson said.

After being tipped off that a military officer had attended Staples's Jan. 26, 2006, presentation in Halifax, the Ottawa Citizen requested under the Access to Information law all documents discussing public speeches in the city for the period Jan. 15 to Jan. 30, 2006.

Department officials claimed they did "a thorough and complete search," and no such records could be found. A source, however, forwarded copies of military documents discussing Staples and other speeches to be given in Halifax.

It took almost a year for the department to release the documents. But, Robertson said: "The implication that people are sitting on stuff and trying to mislead is not accurate."

Lawyer and access to information specialist Michel Drapeau said what happened to Staples is not right.

"Is there something illegal here? Not really, but it's the impropriety of having an officer on the public payroll doing fundamentally what could be seen by some as a surveillance operation," said Drapeau, a retired colonel and author of a law book on the Access to Information Act.

Staples has questioned what he sees is a move by Hillier to push the military away from peacekeeping and into more combat-oriented roles.

Ottawa Citizen

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montrealgazette.com

SHIPPING OUT: Amid rising opposition to Canada's mission in Afghanistan, a contingent of Quebec-based soldiers has left serve there. Meet the soldiers in a video series by The Gazette's Phil Carpenter at montrealgazette.com/shippingout