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Taliban frees more hostages; 12 of 19 South Koreans released in deal criticized by Kabu minister

IDNUMBER 200708300060
PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: News
PAGE: C1
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript
(Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 159

Taliban militants released 12 captives in a series of handovers yesterday, part of a deal with Seoul to free all 19 South Korean hostages that one Afghan minister warned would embolden the insurgents.

The South Koreans, Christian aid workers who were kidnapped nearly six weeks ago, were turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross at three locations in central Afghanistan. None of the 12 spoke to reporters.

The remaining South Koreans will be freed over the next 48 hours, Taliban commanders have said.

The first three women freed came to Qala-E-Kazi in a single car, their heads covered with red and green shawls. Red Cross officials quickly took them to their vehicles and set out for the office of the Afghan Red Crescent in the town of Ghazni, witnesses said.

Under the deal reached Tuesday, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by year's end.

Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the staunchly Muslim country.

Group: Aid money difficult to track

IDNUMBER 200708300072
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner
(Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 309

An international think-tank says it found starving children but little evidence of how Canadian aid is helping people in Kandahar's main hospital or a sprawling refugee camp.

The Senlis Council says Ottawa should drastically overhaul how it directs and tracks aid to the volatile southern region of Afghanistan.

"This apparent lack of impact on the suffering of the Afghan people in Kandahar not only neglects our humanitarian obligations," says a report released Wednesday.

"It creates a climate that fuels the insurgency and undermines the already dangerous work of Canada's military in this hostile war zone."

Canada's new development minister, Bev Oda, swiftly played down the Senlis findings as simplistic and without context.

Ottawa is sending more than \$1 billion over 10 years in aid to experienced partners on the ground who are accountable for it, she said in an interview.

That money — plus another \$45 million just announced by Oda — is for security, governance and rebuilding.

Sixty-nine Canadians and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Leaders for the Bloc Quebecois, the Liberals and the NDP have all stressed their opposition to keeping troops there beyond the current February 2009 timeline.

The NDP, in fact, wants Canadian soldiers withdrawn immediately.

Senlis, supported by 12 European foundations, is best known for its well-heeled campaign against the forced, U.S.-led destruction of Afghanistan's burgeoning poppy crops.

Instead, Senlis supports poppy-for-medicine projects that would see village-cultivated poppy turned into morphine tablets rather than heroin.

The group has denied reports that it is backed by the pharmaceutical industry.

Senlis president and Canadian lawyer Norine MacDonald says her group visited Kandahar's main treatment centre, Mirwais hospital, along with the region's largest refugee camp in an effort to trace spending.

Videotape the group gathered at the hospital earlier this month and showed Wednesday was disturbing.

A three-year-old girl, ribs jutting, rocks back and forth in one frame. Another shot pans across crying youngsters who literally spill out of overcrowded beds in the ward for starving children.

Senlis says there were 28 children sharing eight beds during its visit.

A man living in a large refugee camp in Kandahar's Zhari district told the group's interviewers that residents lack clean water, food and medical care.

"They are all working," the man says in the video when asked if his children are in school.

"We can only go to the doctor when we have money."

MacDonald also cites what she called a lack of any official Canadian program to support Afghan civilians widowed or injured during NATO bombing campaigns against insurgents.

Canadian dies from gunshot injury within secure area

IDNUMBER 200708300071
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner
(Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 195

A member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

A military statement said the soldier, serving at the headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, died shortly after 7:30 a.m. local time on Wednesday. The victim had been found seriously injured in his room an hour earlier and doctors were unable to save him. The soldier's name is being temporarily withheld at the family's request.

Few other details were available: the Canadian military has not released his age, hometown, rank, military base or regiment.

Military officials have ruled out enemy action, saying the shooting occurred within the NATO compound in Kabul.

"The investigation has just started and all possibilities will be considered, " said Capt. Sylvain Chalifour, a spokeswoman for the Canadian Forces in Kandahar.

Investigators are looking at the possibility of suicide but aren't ruling out homicide or a firearms accident.

Seventy Canadian soldiers have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

The toll includes an accidental shooting that claimed the life of a Canadian soldier in March this year at the NATO base at Kandahar Airfield. Another accidental discharge of a weapon killed a Canadian in August last year while troops were on patrol.

In 2004, a soldier apparently shot and injured himself but the military has not officially said whether it was a suicide attempt.

Release of South Korean hostages begins

IDNUMBER 200708300067
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: The Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner
(Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 350

Taliban militants released 12 captives in a series of handovers Wednesday, part of a deal with Seoul to free all 19 South Korean hostages that one Afghan minister warned would embolden the insurgents.

The South Koreans, Christian aid workers who were kidnapped nearly six weeks ago, were turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross at three locations in central Afghanistan. None of the 12 spoke to reporters.

The remaining South Koreans will be freed over the next 48 hours, Taliban commanders have said.

The first three women freed came to Qala-E-Kazi in a single car, their heads covered with red and green shawls.

Red Cross officials quickly took them to their vehicles and set out for the office of the Afghan Red Crescent in the town of Ghazni, witnesses said.

Under the deal reached Tuesday, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by year's end. Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the staunchly Muslim country.

The Taliban apparently backed down on demands for a prisoner exchange. But the militant group, which killed two South Korean hostages last month, could emerge with enhanced political legitimacy for negotiating successfully with a foreign government.

"One has to say that this release under these conditions will make our difficulties in Afghanistan even bigger," Commerce Minister Amin Farhang told Germany's Bayerischer Rundfunk radio.

"We fear that this decision could become a precedent. The Taliban will continue trying to take hostages to attain their aims."

A German engineer and four Afghan colleagues kidnapped July 18, the day before the South Koreans, are still being held.

South Korea's government, which has been under intense domestic pressure to bring the hostages home, said it tried to adhere to international principles while putting a priority on saving the captives.

"I don't think we made a big deviation from the international community's principle and practice," said South Korean presidential spokesman Cheon Ho-sun.

"Other countries, when faced with this kind of problem, resolve the problem through contacts with kidnappers. I think there is no exception to this," he said.

The deal was made in face-to-face talks between Taliban negotiators and South Korean diplomats in Ghazni.

The Afghan government was not party to the negotiations, which were facilitated by the Red Cross.

The Seoul government and relatives of the hostages have stressed the kidnapped South Koreans were not missionaries, but were doing aid work such as helping in hospitals.

U.S Tim Hortons gift certificates still good for a coffee, doughnut in Afghanistan; Treat | Soldiers confused

IDNUMBER 200708300056
PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: News;News
PAGE: A3
BYLINE: MICHAEL STAPLES staples.michael@dailygleaner.com
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)
WORD COUNT: 191

Canadian troops serving in Afghanistan were not erroneously sent U.S. Tim Hortons gift certificates by the Royal Canadian Legion, a spokesman for the organization's Dominion Command said Wednesday.

Bob Butt said that while certificates say "redeemable at any participating Tim Hortons in the United States," the legion had to buy the American version of the coupons because they were being sent to Kandahar.

"They work in American dollars," Butt said.

"The Tim Hortons outlet at the base in Afghanistan works in American dollars. And everything over there is in American dollars."

Last March, the Royal Canadian Legion launched what it described as its "RCL Troop Morale Fund," designed to buy the soldiers deployed to Afghanistan a Tim Hortons coffee and a doughnut.

The initiative was launched in co-operation with the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, which operates the Tim Hortons outlet in Afghanistan.

Legion branches collected donations from members and sent those funds to Dominion Command in Ottawa for disbursement.

New Brunswick command sent \$7,000, said Don Sutherland, president of the Fredericton Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Sutherland said there has apparently been some confusion among soldiers over the U.S. declaration on the certificates.

A few have been brought into the branch, he said.

Lisa Stopay, a spokeswoman for Tim Hortons, said there is no reason to be concerned or confused.

"The U.S. gift certificates would be redeemable and accepted at our stores in Canada," Stopay said.

"If they are taking a trip, they can be used in the States as well."

Stopay said Tim Hortons has been told that soldiers in Kandahar are using them up quickly.

U.S Tim Hortons gift certificates still good for a coffee, doughnut in Afghanistan; Treat | Soldiers confused

Afghan aid program under fire; Little evidence Canadian money is alleviating suffering, group says

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.30

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Sue Bailey

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 500

An international think–tank says it found starving children but little evidence of how Canadian aid is helping people in Kandahar's main hospital or a sprawling refugee camp.

The Senlis Council says Ottawa should drastically overhaul how it directs and tracks aid to the volatile southern region of Afghanistan.

"This apparent lack of impact on the suffering of the Afghan people in Kandahar not only neglects our humanitarian obligations," says a report released yesterday.

"It creates a climate that fuels the insurgency and undermines the already dangerous work of Canada's military in this hostile war zone."

Canada's new development minister, Bev Oda, swiftly played down the Senlis findings as simplistic and without context.

Ottawa is sending more than \$1 billion over 10 years in aid to experienced partners on the ground who are accountable for it, she said in an interview.

That money – plus another \$45 million just announced by Oda – is for security, governance and rebuilding.

Sixty–nine Canadians and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Leaders for the Bloc Quebecois, the Liberals and the NDP have all stressed their opposition to keeping troops there beyond the current February 2009 timeline.

Senlis, supported by 12 European foundations, is best known for its well–heeled campaign against the forced, U.S.–led destruction of Afghanistan's burgeoning poppy crops.

Instead, Senlis supports poppy–for–medicine projects that would see village–cultivated poppy turned into morphine tablets rather than heroin. The group has denied reports that it is backed by the pharmaceutical industry.

Senlis president and Canadian lawyer Norine MacDonald says her group visited Kandahar's main treatment centre, Mirwais hospital, along with the region's largest refugee camp in an effort to trace spending.

Videotape the group gathered at the hospital earlier this month and showed yesterday was disturbing.

A three-year-old girl, ribs jutting, rocks back and forth in one frame. Another shot pans across crying youngsters who literally spill out of overcrowded beds in the ward for starving children.

Senlis says there were 28 children sharing eight beds during its visit.

A man living in a large refugee camp in Kandahar's Zhari district told the group's interviewers that residents lack clean water, food and medical care.

"They are all working," the man says in the video when asked if his children are in school. "We can only go to the doctor when we have money."

MacDonald also cites what she called a lack of any official Canadian program to support Afghan civilians widowed or injured during NATO bombing campaigns against insurgents.

Canada and other NATO countries must commit more ground troops – beyond any scheduled 2009 pull-out – "so battles can be won without bombing campaigns," she told a news conference. Otherwise, neglected Afghan suffering will make easy work for Taliban recruiters.

Oda responded by saying Senlis has "an agenda of its own." She did not elaborate.

A CIDA official who spoke on background said Ottawa has so far provided \$3 million through the International Committee of the Red Cross for health priorities, including improvements to Mirwais Hospital. Another \$10 million has been committed.

And more than 200,000 Afghans have received food aid since December according to the World Food Program, the official added.

"We don't claim to get every single individual in every single community. But the reality is we are the lead donor."

Senlis is disregarding a broad swath of success to focus on isolated cases where much more must still be done, Oda says.

Carrie Vandewint, a policy adviser for World Vision Canada, agrees. "We do good development work in the northwest of Afghanistan," she said after a trip last spring to Herat and other regions.

"I saw the success we're having." These include literacy programs for women and children in isolated areas, and "fantastic irrigation projects that we're supporting for farmers in remote communities."

Canadian C-17's first landing smooth at Kandahar airport

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle-Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: World
PAGE: A5
BYLINE: Martin Ouellet
WORD COUNT: 241

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) – In the pitch darkness of night, the Canadian military's new C-17 transport plane touched down softly at Kandahar Military Airport on Wednesday in southern Afghanistan.

The pilots landed the giant carrier with its lights extinguished, guided solely by night-vision goggles.

"We took a tactical approach with the night-vision goggles, with the airplane lights turned off, with the engines idling," said Maj. Jean Maisonneuve, chief check pilot at 429 Transport Squadron, 8 Wing, in Trenton, Ont.

"In a way, we're sort of pioneers."

The gigantic, 200-tonne bird of steel is expected to have an effect on Canadian troop confidence as they continue to battle with Taliban insurgents, Maisonneuve said in a short interview shortly after landing.

"This plane will have a positive impact on the morale of the troops. Speaking with my colleagues, I can tell you that everyone is happy to know that we have modern tools at our disposal and a better (transport) capacity than before," he said.

The C-17, a four-engine military transport plane built by Boeing, is phenomenal.

It is a little more than 52 metres long, seven metres wide and has a 52-metre wingspan. The inside is about 16 metres high.

The new planes can carry four-times the amount of cargo of the Hercules C-130 transport planes, formerly the largest planes in the Canadian fleet. The C-17s are designed to replace some of the aging Hercules fleet.

The C-17s can also travel twice as fast, reaching up to 80 per cent of the speed of sound, and have a cruising speed of 1,000 kilometres an hour.

In its giant belly, the plane can carry 77,000 tonnes of cargo, including vehicles, and can transport up to 100 soldiers.

"We could say that a C-17 is capable of doing the work of six Hercules," Maisonneuve said.

Suicide possibility in Canadian soldier's death in Kabul

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: World
PAGE: A3
WORD COUNT: 179

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) – A member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul.

A military statement said the soldier, serving at the headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, died shortly after 7:30 a.m. local time on Wednesday.

The victim had been found seriously injured in his room an hour earlier and doctors were unable to save him.

The soldier's name is being temporarily withheld at the family's request.

Few other details were available: the Canadian military has not released his age, hometown, rank, military base or regiment.

Military officials have ruled out enemy action, saying the shooting occurred within the NATO compound in Kabul.

"The investigation has just started and all possibilities will be considered," said Capt. Sylvain Chalifour, a spokeswoman for the Canadian Forces in Kandahar.

Investigators are looking at the possibility of suicide but aren't ruling out homicide or a firearms accident.

Seventy Canadian soldiers have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

The toll includes an accidental shooting that claimed the life of a Canadian soldier in March this year at the NATO base at Kandahar Airfield. Another accidental discharge of a weapon killed a Canadian in August last year while troops were on patrol.

In 2004, a soldier apparently shot and injured himself but the military has not officially said whether it was a suicide attempt.

Afghan kids starving: Where is Canada?; Oda downplays council report criticizing how aid deployed

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A3
BYLINE: Sue Bailey
WORD COUNT: 482

OTTAWA – An international think–tank says it found starving children but little evidence of how Canadian aid is helping people in Kandahar's main hospital or a sprawling refugee camp.

The Senlis Council says Ottawa should drastically overhaul how it directs and tracks aid to the volatile southern region of Afghanistan.

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A three–year–old girl, ribs jutting, rocks back and forth in one frame. Another shot pans across crying youngsters who literally spill out of overcrowded beds in the ward for starving children.

Afghan kids starving: Where is Canada?; Oda downplays council report criticizing how aid deployed **12**

Senlis says there were 28 children sharing eight beds during its visit.

A man living in a large refugee camp in Kandahar's Zhari district told the group's interviewers that residents lack clean water, food and medical care.

"They are all working," the man says in the video when asked if his children are in school. "We can only go to the doctor when we have money."

MacDonald also cites what she called a lack of any official Canadian program to support Afghan civilians widowed or injured during NATO bombing campaigns against insurgents.

Canada and other NATO countries must commit more ground troops – beyond any scheduled 2009 pull-out – "so battles can be won without bombing campaigns," she told a news conference. Otherwise, neglected Afghan suffering will make easy work for Taliban recruiters.

On the bright side, Senlis tracked down a single example of a Canada-funded reconstruction project. Its video shows a two-year bridge rebuilding venture amid dusty rock piles in Kandahar. But it also depicts child labour being condoned on a work site where Afghans say there is no accident or medical insurance to cover injuries.

Oda responded by saying Senlis has "an agenda of its own." She did not elaborate.

A CIDA official who spoke on background said Ottawa has so far provided \$3 million through the International Committee of the Red Cross for health priorities, including improvements to Mirwais Hospital. Another \$10 million has been committed.

And more than 200,000 Afghans have received food aid since December according to the World Food Program, the official added.

Canadian military investigating soldier's death; Unnamed soldier died in secure military compound

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.30

SECTION: World

PAGE: B7

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 219

A member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

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In 2004, a soldier apparently shot and injured himself but the military has not officially said whether it was a suicide attempt.

Most of Canada's 2,500 soldiers on the mission to Afghanistan are based in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. Canada does have about 100 soldiers from various regiments in Kabul at the NATO headquarters, mostly doing administrative work and support for the Afghan government.

Think-tank finds little evidence of Canadian aid in Kandahar

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.30

SECTION: Sports

PAGE: B5

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: OTTAWA

ILLUSTRATION: A barbecue apron produced by the young Liberals of Newfoundland is for sale at the national Liberal caucus in St. John's, N.L., Wednesday. Canadian Press photo

WORD COUNT: 158

An international think-tank says it found starving children but little evidence of how Canadian aid is helping people in Kandahar's main hospital or a sprawling refugee camp.

The Senlis Council says Ottawa should drastically overhaul how it directs and tracks aid to the volatile southern region of Afghanistan.

"This apparent lack of impact on the suffering of the Afghan people in Kandahar not only neglects our humanitarian obligations," says a report released Wednesday.

"It creates a climate that fuels the insurgency and undermines the already dangerous work of Canada's military in this hostile war zone."

Canada's new development minister, Bev Oda, swiftly played down the Senlis findings as simplistic and without context.

Ottawa is sending more than \$1 billion over 10 years in aid to experienced partners on the ground who are accountable for it, she said in an interview.

That money – plus another \$45 million just announced by Oda – is for security, governance and rebuilding.

Sixty-nine Canadians and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Senlis, supported by 12 European foundations, is best known for its well-heeled campaign against the forced, U.S.-led destruction of Afghanistan's burgeoning poppy crops. Instead, Senlis supports poppy-for-medicine projects.

Duceppe a threat to Harper government

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.30

SECTION: Opinion

PAGE: A7

COLUMN: National analysis

BYLINE: Hébert, Chantal

WORD COUNT: 566

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe are on a collision course that could yet see Canada return to the polls before the end of the year.

Since the last election, the sovereignist party has been key to the survival of the minority government. But now Harper and Duceppe are headed into the fall session of Parliament with what may amount to irreconcilable political needs. The prime minister has exhausted his initial agenda. This month's cabinet shuffle was the first step of a relaunch that should, in all logic, include the presentation of a throne speech.

Except that such a speech would trigger an automatic confidence vote at a time when Duceppe can ill afford to extend more support to the government.

At the end of a pre-session caucus retreat last week, the Bloc leader warned the prime minister against seeking the confidence of the House in the fall. He also said he would not support a throne speech that did not specifically exclude an extension of the current Afghan mission beyond its 2009 deadline.

There is more to these warnings than the routine noises of an opposition leader seeking to demonstrate that he cannot be taken for granted, and more also than just a cynical attempt to exploit the rising profile of the deployment in Quebec. The Bloc is undergoing a crisis of relevance and the Afghan issue is only one part of a larger picture.

With the Parti Québécois in third place in the National Assembly, the Bloc can no longer rally support around the imminent goal of another referendum. Given past Conservative overtures to Quebec, nor can it capitalize on dissatisfaction with the government in the way that it used to in the recent Liberal past.

These days, the Quebecers who are satisfied with the general directions of the government increasingly question why they should stick with the Bloc while those who oppose Conservative policies are increasingly uncomfortable with Duceppe's support of the Harper regime. Some of those dynamics are on exhibit in the three Quebec ridings at play in next month's federal byelections.

In Roberval-Lac-Saint-Jean and, to a lesser degree, in Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, the Bloc has to fend off the appeal of supporting a governing party. Meanwhile, in the Montreal riding of Outremont, it has to worry about a slippage of its votes to the NDP. That party's call for an immediate Canadian withdrawal from Afghanistan is more in sync with anti-war voters than the Bloc's position of staying the course until 2009.

Over the coming months, sticking to that particular position will be a challenge for the Bloc. At this point, going the extra mile of extending the life of the Harper government against the backdrop of mounting Quebec casualties on the Afghan front looks like a bridge too far for Duceppe.

If the Bloc withdraws its support for the Conservatives, the government could in theory turn to one of the other opposition parties. But in practice it is unlikely that either the Liberals or the NDP would step into the

breach and vote for a Harper throne speech.

Given their rhetoric, neither could do so without losing face. Yet the Liberals, who don't sound keen for an election at this stage, could be even less eager for one after the Sept. 17 byelections. But more on that in another column.

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Soldier killed

SOURCETAG 0708300716
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 37
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 66

A member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

The soldier, serving at the headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, died shortly after 7:30 a.m. local time yesterday.

The victim had been found seriously injured in his room an hour earlier and doctors were unable to save him.

The soldier's name is being temporarily withheld at the family's request. Military officials have ruled out enemy action. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Taliban fears after captives released

SOURCETAG 0708300700
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 12
ILLUSTRATION: photo of AMIN FARHANG Issues warning
BYLINE: AP
DATELINE: QALA-E-KAZI, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 228

Taliban militants released 12 captives in a series of handovers yesterday, part of a deal with Seoul to free all 19 South Korean hostages that one Afghan minister warned would embolden the insurgents.

The South Koreans, Christian aid workers who were kidnapped nearly six weeks ago, were turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross at three locations in central Afghanistan. None of the 12 spoke to reporters.

The remaining South Koreans will be freed over the next 48 hours, Taliban commanders have said.

The first three women freed came to Qala-E-Kazi in a single car, their heads covered with red and green shawls. Red Cross officials quickly took them to their vehicles and set out for the office of the Afghan Red Crescent in the town of Ghazni, witnesses said.

Under the deal reached Tuesday, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by year's end. Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the Muslim country.

The Taliban apparently backed down on demands for a prisoner exchange. But the militant group, which killed two South Korean hostages last month, could emerge with enhanced political legitimacy for negotiating successfully with a foreign government.

"One has to say that this release under these conditions will make our difficulties in Afghanistan even bigger," Commerce Minister Amin Farhang told Germany's Bayerischer Rundfunk radio.

"We fear that this decision could become a precedent. The Taliban will continue trying to take hostages to attain their aims." KEYWORDS=WORLD

Feds express concern over talks with Taliban

SOURCETAG 0708300627
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 30
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: OTTAWA
WORD COUNT: 173

The Canadian government has expressed regret over South Korea's decision to negotiate a hostage release with the Taliban.

With a presence in Afghanistan that comprises 2,300 soldiers, as well as development officials, diplomats, and non-government workers,

Canada reacted with caution to the news.

In a carefully crafted response delivered late yesterday, Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier's office expressed disapproval of South Korean's handling of the crisis.

"We do not negotiate with terrorists, for any reason," said a statement issued by Bernier's office.

"Such negotiations, even if unsuccessful, only lead to further acts of terrorism."

Bernier was shuffled into the Foreign Affairs portfolio this month and touted as an ideal point man for communicating with Canadians — especially Quebecers — about the mission in Afghanistan.

Taliban militants released 12 of 19 South Korean missionary aid workers yesterday, with the rest to be freed over the next 48 hours.

Under the deal reached Tuesday, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by year's end.

Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the Muslim country.

The Afghan government was not party to the talks.

Critics say the Taliban could emerge with enhanced political legitimacy for negotiating successfully with a foreign government.

Norine MacDonald, president of the Senlis Council, a policy think-tank opposed to the eradication of the Afghan poppy crop, said the deal was disconcerting. **KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

NATO soldier killed on patrol Nationalities of troops involved not released

SOURCETAG 0708300626
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 30
BYLINE: AP
DATELINE: KABUL
WORD COUNT: 225

A NATO soldier has been killed and two others have been wounded during a routine patrol in southern Afghanistan.

A NATO statement says an Afghan interpreter working with the troops was also killed.

NATO did not provide the soldier's nationalities or the circumstances which led to the deaths.

Meanwhile, a member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

A military statement said the soldier, serving at the headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, died shortly after 7:30 a.m. local time yesterday.

The victim had been found seriously injured in his room an hour earlier and doctors were unable to save him.

The soldier's name is being temporarily withheld at the family's request.

Few other details were available: The Canadian military has not released his age, hometown, rank, military base or regiment.

Military officials have ruled out enemy action, saying the shooting occurred within the NATO compound in Kabul.

"The investigation has just started and all possibilities will be considered," said Capt. Sylvain Chalifour, a spokeswoman for the Canadian Forces in Kandahar.

Investigators are looking at the possibility of suicide, but aren't ruling out homicide or a firearms accident.

Seventy Canadian soldiers have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

The toll includes an accidental shooting that claimed the life of a Canadian soldier in March this year at the NATO base at Kandahar Airfield.

Another accidental discharge of a weapon killed a Canadian in August last year while troops were on patrol.

In 2004, a soldier apparently shot and injured himself, but the military has not officially said whether it was a suicide attempt.

Most of Canada's 2,500 soldiers on the mission to Afghanistan are based in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. Canada does have about 100 soldiers from various regiments in Kabul at the NATO headquarters, mostly doing administrative work and support for the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Taliban fears after captives released

SOURCETAG 0708300597
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 10
ILLUSTRATION: photo of AMIN FARHANG Issues warning
BYLINE: AP
DATELINE: QALA-E-KAZI, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 228

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"One has to say that this release under these conditions will make our difficulties in Afghanistan even bigger," Commerce Minister Amin Farhang told Germany's Bayerischer Rundfunk radio.

"We fear that this decision could become a precedent. The Taliban will continue trying to take hostages to attain their aims." KEYWORDS=WORLD

'Olive branch' offered over decals

SOURCETAG 0708300587
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 5
ILLUSTRATION: photo of RIC MCIVER Has compromise
BYLINE: SHAWN LOGAN, SUN MEDIA
WORD COUNT: 266

Yellow ribbon stickers may yet adorn city vehicles as the alderman who pushed plans to use the patriotic decals will offer a compromise in hopes of swaying his colleagues.

While council last month shot down plans to put "Support Our Troops" stickers on the entire civic fleet, Ald. Ric McIver said he hopes making it voluntary will be enough to convince his peers to allow the controversial decorations.

McIver will ask council Sept. 10 to allow city workers who want the decals on their buses, fire trucks and police cruisers to place them voluntarily without fear of repercussions.

"I think the last motion was the right one but since council didn't support it, I'm looking for that hallowed middle ground," he said.

"This is basically somewhat of an olive branch to my colleagues, so if they don't want to force it on all employees, let (the employees) make the decision themselves."

Council voted 11–4 against the plan to put the yellow ribbons on all city vehicles in July, opting instead to sell the decals at city facilities and donate all proceeds.

McIver said making the use of the stickers optional would alleviate concerns held by some aldermen it could violate workers' rights if they feel the symbol shows tacit support for Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

Ald. Helene Larocque, who voted against the original plan, said she was worried about forcing the ribbons on workers, but making it voluntary seems a fair solution.

However, she is concerned if the idea goes forward, the city will be deluged with requests from charity groups asking for their own causes to be displayed on the civic fleet.

"If it is voluntary I'd be fine with it, but I think there should be some criteria or guidelines around it," she said.

But, Ald. Gord Lowe said the principle is taxpayer-funded equipment should not be used to promote political views.

"This is an instance where emotion has hugely taken over but you don't use public vehicles for this sort of thing," he said. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

DATE: 2007.08.29

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 162

^One Canadian Soldier Dies in Afghanistan@<

August 29, 2007

OTTAWA, ONTARIO--(Marketwire – Aug. 29, 2007) – A Canadian Forces member serving with the International Security Assistance Force Headquarters (ISAF HQ) in Kabul, Afghanistan succumbed to a gunshot wound shortly after 7:30 a.m. Kabul time despite efforts by ISAF medical personnel to save him. The member had been found significantly injured in his room at approximately 6:30 a.m.

No further details are available regarding the circumstances surrounding this incident, although enemy action has been ruled out, as the incident occurred within the secure confines of the ISAF HQ perimeter in Kabul. The matter is under investigation by ISAF authorities and the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service.

The name of the deceased soldier is being temporarily withheld at the request of the family.

The thoughts and prayers of the men and women of the Canadian Forces go out to the family and friends of the deceased.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Information: 613-996-2353/54

After hours: 613-792-2973

www.forces.gc.ca

INDUSTRY: Government – International, Government – Local,
Government – National, Government – Security (law enforcement,
homeland etc), Government – State

SUBJECT: DFC

NEWS RELEASE TRANSMITTED BY Marketwire

Canada won't say whether it condones hostage talks with Taliban

DATE: 2007.08.29

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 497

OTTAWA (CP) _ The Canadian government refused to say Wednesday whether it supports South Korea's decision to negotiate a hostage release with the Taliban.

With a presence in Afghanistan that comprises 2,300 soldiers, as well as development officials, diplomats, and non-government workers, Canada reacted cautiously to the news.

So cautiously that it took Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier's office seven hours to prepare a response to a question about whether Canada agreed with South Korea's handling of the crisis.

Finally came a two-part reply to questions that were never asked. Bernier's office replied that: Canada opposes murder and hostage-taking and Canada is unaware of specific terms of the deal between South Korea and the Taliban.

Bernier was shuffled into the Foreign Affairs portfolio this month and touted for his supposed ability to communicate with Canadians _ especially Quebecers _ about the mission in Afghanistan.

Taliban militants released 12 of 19 South Korean missionary aid workers on Wednesday, with the rest to be freed over the next 48 hours.

Under the deal reached Tuesday, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by year's end. Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the Muslim country.

The agreement was controversial because the Afghan government was not party to the talks. Critics say the Taliban could emerge with enhanced political legitimacy for negotiating successfully with a foreign government.

Norine MacDonald, president of the Senlis Council, a policy think-tank opposed to the eradication of the Afghan poppy crop, said the deal was disconcerting.

``That very concerning," she said. ``It's almost outrageous that that should be going on. . . It shows a loss of control over parts of Afghanistan."

Kevin McCort, interim CEO of CARE Canada, said his organization followed the hostage situation closely.

``We've actually had some experience with kidnapping of our staff in Afghanistan and elsewhere, so it's something that we take very seriously," McCort said.

McCort said CARE takes what it calls an acceptance and integration approach in Afghanistan and the other countries where it has a presence. Workers gain protection of local communities by keeping them informed and getting their acceptance. They also live in those communities and employ a lot of local staff.

“We don't need to change our practice because what they (the South Korean missionaries) did, we would never do,” he said.

“If you look at what we do in terms of our acceptance and integration strategies, sending a busload of people down to Kandahar is neither of those . . . We feel that our staff and safety precautions are fairly good so we're not really looking at learning much from their experience.”

CARE has not had a presence in some of the most volatile regions in southern Afghanistan, such as Kandahar or Helmand province since at least 2001.

The organization has been working in the somewhat unstable regions of Ghazni and Paktika province, but has had to constrain operations over concerns of staff safety.

CARE has been in Afghanistan since the 1960s and the only time it pulled out was in the 1980s during the height of the Soviet occupation, McCort said.

“We were actively working in Afghanistan during the entire period of Taliban rule,” he said.

“It takes an awful lot for us to leave the country.

“We have left Iraq. That was just simply impossible to continue working there.”

8-country poll, including Canada, shows little support for more troops abroad

DATE: 2007.08.29

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS BUSINESS MEDIA

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 647

WASHINGTON (AP) _ People in the United States, Canada and six other countries showed little taste for stepping up the role of their countries' troops in overseas crises but seemed more open to other types of involvement abroad, an Associated Press-Ipsos poll indicates.

In each country surveyed, only about one in 10 expressed the belief the government does not send its military to trouble spots frequently enough. Roughly eight in 10 said their leaders send forces abroad either as often as they should or too frequently, said the poll, which also sampled attitudes in Britain, South Korea, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

When it came to their country's role in world affairs in general, however, only in the United States and Britain did about one-half or more say their government is too involved. In the others, at least three of four said their governments either are not doing enough or are doing what they should.

The survey was conducted in mid- to late May as the war in Iraq was beginning its fourth year and NATO allies were facing a early-year upsurge in violence in Afghanistan. Since then, events have transpired that could have changed some peoples' views about their countries' roles in foreign affairs, such as the taking of South Korean hostages in Afghanistan and the ascension of new leaders in Britain and France.

Every country in the survey has forces in Afghanistan, while the United States and Britain have troops in Iraq as well.

In the United States, Britain and Germany, more than one-half said their countries intervene militarily too frequently. Elsewhere, more said their governments are dispatching troops properly, although Italians were about evenly split between that and saying they are sent too often.

When asked about their country's involvement in world affairs in general, 55 per cent in the United States and 48 per cent in Britain said their country does too much. Nowhere else was that sentiment as strong: the next closest was Germany, where 22 per cent said they felt that way.

In the United States, Britain, Germany and France, majorities said they believe their country is viewed by others as a strong force in world affairs. Sixty-nine per cent in the United States said that, while 84 per cent in South Korea said they believe their country is seen as weak, the highest such figures in the poll.

In general, those who saw too much military involvement by their countries were likelier to be female and older people. Better-educated people in France were likelier to think their country has a strong image abroad, while in South Korea the lesser-educated more often felt that way.

Gordon Brown has replaced Tony Blair as British prime minister and has been reducing his country's role in Iraq, while increasing its presence in Afghanistan. New French President Nicolas Sarkozy wants to boost France's role abroad and is interested in strengthening ties with the United States, frayed by his country's opposition to the Iraq war.

Taliban fighters captured 23 South Korean church volunteers last month in Afghanistan. They agreed Tuesday to release the remaining 19 after Seoul reiterated it will remove its 200 troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year and keep missionaries from working there.

In the United States, Republicans were far likelier than Democrats to approve of the country's overseas involvements, a reflection of partisan splits over President George W. Bush's policies. Seventy per cent of Democrats said the United States sends military forces to trouble spots too often, compared with 32 per cent of Republicans and 51 per cent of independents.

The poll involved telephone interviews with 1,000 people in each country, except for 960 in Italy, 968 in France and 1,001 in Germany. The margin of sampling error for each country was plus or minus three percentage points.

On the Net:

AP–Ipsos poll site:

<http://www.ap-ipsosresults.com>

Senlis finds starving kids but little evidence of Canadian aid in Kandahar

DATE: 2007.08.29

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 607

OTTAWA (CP) _ An international think-tank says it found starving children but little evidence of how Canadian aid is helping people in Kandahar's main hospital or a sprawling refugee camp.

The Senlis Council says Ottawa should drastically overhaul how it directs and tracks aid to the volatile southern region of Afghanistan.

“This apparent lack of impact on the suffering of the Afghan people in Kandahar not only neglects our humanitarian obligations,” says a report released Wednesday.

“It creates a climate that fuels the insurgency and undermines the already dangerous work of Canada's military in this hostile war zone.”

Canada's new development minister, Bev Oda, swiftly played down the Senlis findings as simplistic and without context.

Ottawa is sending more than \$1 billion over 10 years in aid to experienced partners on the ground who are accountable for it, she said in an interview.

That money _ plus another \$45 million just announced by Oda _ is for security, governance and rebuilding.

Sixty-nine Canadians and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Leaders for the Bloc Quebecois, the Liberals and the NDP have all stressed their opposition to keeping troops there beyond the current February 2009 timeline. The NDP, in fact, wants Canadian soldiers withdrawn immediately.

Senlis, supported by 12 European foundations, is best known for its well-heeled campaign against the forced, U.S.-led destruction of Afghanistan's burgeoning poppy crops.

Instead, Senlis supports poppy-for-medicine projects that would see village-cultivated poppy turned into morphine tablets rather than heroin. The group has denied reports that it is backed by the pharmaceutical industry.

Senlis president and Canadian lawyer Norine MacDonald says her group visited Kandahar's main treatment centre, Mirwais hospital, along with the region's largest refugee camp in an effort to trace spending.

Videotape the group gathered at the hospital earlier this month and showed Wednesday was disturbing.

A three-year-old girl, ribs jutting, rocks back and forth in one frame. Another shot pans across crying youngsters who literally spill out of overcrowded beds in the ward for starving children.

Senlis says there were 28 children sharing eight beds during its visit.

A man living in a large refugee camp in Kandahar's Zhari district told the group's interviewers that residents lack clean water, food and medical care.

“They are all working,” the man says in the video when asked if his children are in school. “We can only go to the doctor when we have money.”

MacDonald also cites what she called a lack of any official Canadian program to support Afghan civilians widowed or injured during NATO bombing campaigns against insurgents.

Canada and other NATO countries must commit more ground troops _ beyond any scheduled 2009 pull-out _ “so battles can be won without bombing campaigns,” she told a news conference. Otherwise, neglected Afghan suffering will make easy work for Taliban recruiters.

On the bright side, Senlis tracked down a single example of a Canada-funded reconstruction project. Its video shows a two-year bridge rebuilding venture amid dusty rock piles in Kandahar. But it also depicts child labour being condoned on a work site where Afghans say there is no accident or medical insurance to cover injuries.

Oda responded by saying Senlis has “an agenda of its own.” She did not elaborate.

A CIDA official who spoke on background said Ottawa has so far provided \$3 million through the International Committee of the Red Cross for health priorities, including improvements to Mirwais Hospital. Another \$10 million has been committed.

And more than 200,000 Afghans have received food aid since December according to the World Food Program, the official added.

“We don't claim to get every single individual in every single community. But the reality is we are the lead donor.”

Senlis is disregarding a broad swath of success to focus on isolated cases where much more must still be done, Oda says.

Carrie Vandewint, a policy adviser for World Vision Canada, agrees.

“We do good development work in the northwest of Afghanistan,” she said after a trip last spring to Herat and other regions.

“I saw the success we're having.” These include literacy programs for women and children in isolated areas, and “fantastic irrigation projects that we're supporting for farmers in remote communities.”

Still, she said, “the needs are very big all over the country.”

Tracking progress is a continuing challenge because Canada and other countries tend to pool cash in multidonor trust funds, Vandewint added.

“We should be channelling it to partners who can monitor, evaluate and demonstrate results on the ground.”

Taliban free 3 South Korean hostages, another 5 set to be released soon

DATE: 2007.08.29

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 58

QALA-E-KAZI, Afghanistan (AP) _ Taliban militants have released three South Korean hostages today.

They're the first of 19 captives set to be freed under a deal struck between the insurgents and the South Korean government.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene says the three hostages, all women, were first handed to tribal leaders.

Then they were taken to an agreed location where officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross picked them up.

Five more hostages are set to be released in coming hours.

Canadian military investigating soldier's death in secure military compound

DATE: 2007.08.29
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 233

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) _ A member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

A military statement said the soldier, serving at the headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, died shortly after 7:30 a.m. local time on Wednesday.

The victim had been found seriously injured in his room an hour earlier and doctors were unable to save him.

The soldier's name is being temporarily withheld at the family's request.

Few other details were available: the Canadian military has not released his age, hometown, rank, military base or regiment.

Military officials have ruled out enemy action, saying the shooting occurred within the NATO compound in Kabul.

“The investigation has just started and all possibilities will be considered,” said Capt. Sylvain Chalifour, a spokeswoman for the Canadian Forces in Kandahar.

Investigators are looking at the possibility of suicide but aren't ruling out homicide or a firearms accident.

Seventy Canadian soldiers have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

The toll includes an accidental shooting that claimed the life of a Canadian soldier in March this year at the NATO base at Kandahar Airfield. Another accidental discharge of a weapon killed a Canadian in August last year while troops were on patrol.

In 2004, a soldier apparently shot and injured himself but the military has not officially said whether it was a suicide attempt.

Most of Canada's 2,500 soldiers on the mission to Afghanistan are based in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. Canada does have about 100 soldiers from various regiments in Kabul at the NATO headquarters, mostly doing administrative work and support for the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai.

Legalize opium–poppy cultivation in Afghanistan: Green party

DATE: 2007.08.29

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 103

OTTAWA (CP) _ Canada's Green party says the international community should legitimize opium–poppy production in Afghanistan.

Party Leader Elizabeth May says efforts to eradicate the country's opium trade have failed and it's time to try something different.

She says legitimizing poppy cultivation would allow Afghan farmers to earn a decent living while cutting out the drug lords and the Taliban, who now reap the benefits from the illegal trade.

The plan would see Afghan opium processed into morphine and exported to developing countries under special trade agreements.

May says efforts to wipe out poppy fields are actually undermining international efforts at reconstruction.

Studies suggest poppy production is soaring in Afghanistan and the country produces 90 per cent of the world's opium.

Afghan–Kidnappings–Update (details, background)

DATE: 2007.08.29

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 122

QALA–E–KAZI, Afghanistan — Taliban militants have released eight of the 19 remaining South Korean hostages this morning.

They are the first freed under a deal struck between the Afghan militants and the South Korean government .

The hostages, all church workers, were released into the care of officials of the Red Cross at two separate locations in central Afghanistan.

The first group of three women arrived in a village in a single car, their heads covered with red and green shawls.

Several hours later four women and one man were released in another location.

None of the eight said anything to reporters.

To secure their release, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year.

Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the country.

The Taliban apparently backed down on earlier demands for a prisoner exchange.

In late July, they executed two male hostages, and they released two women earlier this month.

The insurgents have said they will free all the hostages over the next few days.

(AP)

mcw

INDEX:Defence, International, Transport

DATE: 2007.08.29

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 128

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Canadian soldiers are now almost powerless against roadside bombs.

But they soon will have more protection from specialized vehicles which detect, unearth and neutralize the bombs.

Improvised explosive devices, or I-E-D's, have become the biggest threat facing Canadian troops in recent months, as insurgents adapt their tactics.

Canada is buying 16 vehicles from the American armed forces, with deliveries starting in October.

The price tag is 29.6 (m) million.

Of the 69 Canadian soldiers killed in the war-ravaged country since 2002, more than half — 38 — have died as a result of roadside bombs, mines or suicide attacks.

Canada is buying six Husky vehicles that can detect mines buried under or at the side of roads, while the five Buffalo vehicles on order will dig them up using extended arms and cameras.

Rounding out the team will be five Cougar vehicles, capable of neutralizing bombs.

The vehicles are expected to make the situation a bit safer in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan.

(CP)

bjk

INDEX:International, Defence

DATE: 2007.08.29

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 112

INDEX:International, Defence

QALA-E-KAZI, Afghanistan — Three South Koreans are free after being held captive in Afghanistan for more than a month.

A militant spokesman says up to seven more may be released later today.

The Taliban released the three women under a deal they struck with South Korean officials.

An A-P reporter who witnessed the release says the hostages — all covered in green shawls — were first handed to tribal leaders.

Then they were taken to an agreed location where officials with the International Committee of the Red Cross picked them up.

In exchange for the captives, Seoul has pledged to withdraw its 200 troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year and stop allowing South Korean Christian missionaries to travel there.

The militants appear to have backed a demand for a prisoner exchange.

The Taliban originally kidnapped 23 hostages as they travelled by bus from Kabul to Kandahar on July 19th.

Two male hostages have been executed.

Two other women were freed earlier this month.

(AP)

LAK

McGuinty diminishes sentiment by inflating it into slogan

IDNUMBER 200708300142
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A21
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 537

It is intriguing that there is a debate over Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's decision to rename part of Highway 401 the Highway of Heroes. Usually, Canadians shrug off such things. There was little controversy in 1965, the last time the 401 was renamed. (Then it was designated the Macdonald–Cartier Freeway to honour two Fathers of Confederation.)

Nor was there widespread angst when Ottawa decided to attach the name of former Liberal prime minister Lester Pearson to Toronto's Malton airport. To most drivers, the Macdonald–Cartier Freeway remains the 401. To most air travellers, Toronto's international airport is still Toronto airport.

But the Highway of Heroes decision has struck a nerve. A week after Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield announced the name change, letters to the editor blasting the decision were still appearing in the Star.

Some of this has to do with the widespread sentiment against the Afghan war. Cansfield said the aim of the name change is simply to honour Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, not the war itself. But given that the Ontario announcement was made just as Ottawa launched its own public relations push to promote the war, her timing did strike some as curious.

I suspect, however, that there is a deeper reason for the unease. A good many Canadians, no matter what they think about the Afghan conflict, are instinctively suspicious of jingoism.

Chief of defence staff Gen. Rick Hillier found this out two years ago when he called Canada's Taliban enemies in Afghanistan "scumbags." There's little love lost on the Taliban here in Canada. But "scumbag" was deemed over the top. Critics lambasted Hillier's language as too American, by which they meant too black and white.

In the U.S., President George W. Bush can get away with calling his opponents "the worst of the worst." But in Canada, there seems to be a sneaking suspicion that matters are not always that simple.

In that sense, the Highway of Heroes moniker awakens the same reaction. It seems too extreme, too ideological – too American.

To me, however, McGuinty's decision conjures up not so much the U.S. as the old Soviet Union, with its Hero of Labour medals for workers who exceeded their production quotas.

With their extravagant terminology, the Soviets diminished language. But they also took real human activities (people usually like to do a good job) and, by turning them into propaganda slogans, diminished these, too.

So, too, with the Highway of Heroes. McGuinty has latched onto something real – the spontaneous vigils along Highway 401 to honour dead soldiers being transported from Trenton to Toronto. But by inflating this honest sentiment into a slogan, he has diminished it.

Because the point of the honouring is not that the dead were all heroes. Many didn't have a chance to do anything heroic. It is that we sent them to their deaths.

Journalists and politicians use the word "hero" lightly. But most soldiers will tell you that death in war is rarely heroic and that those who set out to be heroes in battle often end up endangering not just themselves but their comrades.

They will also tell you that there is nothing romantic about being killed by a roadside bomb.

To families and friends, those killed in Afghanistan will probably always be heroes. But that is the nature of families and friends.

If the dead were to miraculously reappear, they would probably blanch with embarrassment. They would say they were just doing their jobs.

They would probably also call the highway between Trenton and Toronto the 401.

Thomas Walkom's column appears Thursday and Sunday

Aid not reaching hospital: Group; Starving Afghan girl, awful conditions shown on video; Oda says CIDA reports progress there

IDNUMBER 200708300132
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A21

ILLUSTRATION: A video frame supplied by the Senlis Council shows a starving 3-year-old girl at Mirwais Hospital in southern Afghanistan sitting next to an unidentified doctor. She weighs about nine pounds, the group said. ;

BYLINE: Tonda Maccharles
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 519

OTTAWA

Armed with video clips taken just three weeks ago showing desperate hospital conditions and starving children, an international research group disputes Ottawa's claims that progress is being made in rebuilding southern Afghanistan.

Canadian lawyer Norine MacDonald, president and lead researcher of the Senlis Council, told a news conference that Canadian aid efforts in Kandahar province are failing utterly while the Taliban is increasingly winning support in the southern region where Canadian troops are based.

The group made a similar charge in June, and prompted an indignant response by then-CIDA minister Josee Verner who denied there is evidence of starvation in Kandahar. Yesterday, her successor Bev Oda said the Senlis Council does not have "all the information" and insisted Canadian aid money is reaching its destinations. She acknowledged much work remains.

MacDonald said the Senlis Council team tried to verify the delivery of medical and food aid from specific Canadian pledges.

Team members visited the largest refugee camp in the region, which they said has not received a food aid shipment since March 2006, and Mirwais Hospital, the main Kandahar City facility that serves Afghans from five provinces.

MacDonald said her team had been in and out of the hospital more than a dozen times and could find no evidence, nor any hospital official to confirm, that \$5.3 million committed to the hospital through the International Red Cross Committee "was ever received."

Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency, has committed \$1 billion over 10 years to development and humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan.

As part of that package, Ottawa gave the Red Cross \$5 million, mostly for Mirwais Hospital, and another \$350,000 specifically for "a maternal waiting home adjacent to the hospital to provide comprehensive essential obstetric care to expectant mothers."

CIDA's published material had indicated a temporary facility was already in use, while work on a permanent facility was to begin shortly. But on Aug. 7, the Senlis Council team found only a large empty tent outside the hospital, which was removed the day after MacDonald began filming her findings.

A CIDA official, speaking on background, confirmed yesterday the tent had been the temporary site for pregnant women arriving from outlying areas.

Oda said the Red Cross has determined the services can be better provided within the hospital. On Saturday, Canada pledged an additional \$10 million through UNICEF to the hospital and maternity care there. Some money may also go to the training of maternity care workers in southern Afghanistan.

Inside Mirwais Hospital, MacDonald's video evidence showed 28 suffering, needy children crammed into a room with eight beds.

On a table in a hallway sat a clearly starving 3-year-old girl, identified as a child from nearby Helmand province, next to an Afghan doctor.

The doctor complained the hospital has not got the space, beds, equipment, drugs or staff training to deal with patients, some of them victims of NATO bombing raids on their villages. It cannot perform basic surgeries on child victims, and has only two housekeepers.

"It's shocking," said MacDonald.

"We could not find evidence of CIDA's work or CIDA-funded work at the hospital. We were not able to find the maternity project, or evidence of the \$5 million that CIDA says it has given," said MacDonald. "The situation in the hospital remains desperate."

Oda says she doesn't have those concerns "at all," saying CIDA staff have personally visited Mirwais Hospital and have reported progress.

Afghans might have to give a bit to receive

IDNUMBER 200708300108
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: Letter
PAGE: AA07
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 221

Let's define 'success' in

Afghanistan

Comment, Aug. 26

Rudyard Griffiths writes that our fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, along with the U.S. military effort in Iraq, "only fuels the counter-insurgency." However, he admits that Pakistan's diplomatic moves toward the Taliban have been "a disaster" and only resulted in more attacks on our troops. When Griffiths asks Pakistan to "police" its borders, doesn't that really mean fighting the Taliban rather than talking to them?

As for Iraq, recent suicide bombings by Sunnis directed at the Yazidis religious sect resulted in more than 500 dead. This had nothing to do with the presence of U.S. troops and everything to do with age-old religious intolerance. Griffiths does not explain how "massive increases in aid" and "training indigenous security forces," ideas he attributes to the U.S. Iraq Study Group, will stop the type of thinking that leads to slaughter over religious and tribal differences.

When even he concedes that the building of girls' schools in Afghanistan is an "unrealistic expectation," perhaps – along with our military operations – we should take a long, hard look at the society we are trying to help. They might have to change their ways as we change our tactics, or we will get nowhere in Afghanistan.

Brian Cybulski, Toronto

Time to look at our role in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708300107
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: Letter
PAGE: AA07
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 125

At war for the wrong reasons?

Comment, Aug. 28

Mark Abley's call for "clarity" in appraising Canada's "mission" in Afghanistan is welcome, but he then undermines his argument with glib statements that beg as many questions as they seem to answer.

Improving the lives of Afghans, undermining the Taliban and freeing states from religion's tyranny are worthwhile causes, but how far do you take this line of reasoning? What about Iran, Sudan, Burma, Zimbabwe, etc.? In what ways and to what extent should Canadians intercede as democratic warriors?

Abley writes, "I'm not certain what the right deed for Canada would now be in Afghanistan." I don't think anybody knows, but we do need to ask serious questions in a public debate or we'll continue on with the usual (deadly) banalities.

Enrico Carlson Cumbo, Toronto

Hostage crisis moves to close; Fears grow in Afghanistan that deal with S. Korea may inspire Taliban to kidnap more foreigners

IDNUMBER 200708300093
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: World And Comment
PAGE: AA03
ILLUSTRATION: Musadeq Sadeq ap A freed South Korean hostage smiles while riding in a Red Cross vehicle after she was released by the Taliban in Ghazni province yesterday. ;
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 479

An agonizing six-week hostage ordeal moved toward a close yesterday, bringing a sigh of relief in South Korea and a warning in Afghanistan that the Taliban have been emboldened.

Following a deal reached Tuesday with the South Korean government, the Islamists freed 12 of their remaining 19 hostages yesterday while the rest were expected to be released as early as today.

All the hostages freed yesterday appeared to be in good health, according to Afghan tribal elders and Red Cross officials who helped broker their release. Held in separate locations by the Taliban, the 12 South Koreans were let go in three different stages over the course of the day in Ghazni province in central Afghanistan. None of the 12 spoke to reporters.

After weeks of sporadic negotiations, a South Korean delegation and Taliban officials brokered a deal Tuesday for the hostage release. South Korea reaffirmed a pledge to withdraw its 200 troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year, as previously planned, and agreed to prevent any evangelical activities by South Korean churches in that country.

The Taliban, for its part, dropped a demand that eight senior Taliban prisoners be released in exchange for the South Koreans. Speculation was rife in Kabul yesterday that the South Korean government had paid a huge ransom for the hostages, a step Afghan officials said would encourage the kidnapping of foreigners. Taliban and South Korean officials denied that a ransom was paid.

An Afghan government minister criticized South Korea for making the hostage agreement and warned it could embolden the Taliban.

"One has to say that this release under these conditions will make our difficulties in Afghanistan even bigger," Commerce Minister Amin Farhang told Bayerischer Rundfunk, a German radio network. "We fear this decision could become a precedent. The Taliban will continue trying to take hostages to attain their aims in Afghanistan."

The 19 hostages were part of a group of 23 Christian volunteers who were kidnapped by the Taliban on July 19, while travelling by public bus from Kabul to the former Taliban stronghold of Kandahar. Few foreigners travel that route by car or public bus because it is considered very dangerous.

The Taliban killed two male hostages when their demands were not met, but released two women earlier this month after South Korea entered direct negotiations. Officials with the International Committee of the Red Cross said the hostages were being medically evaluated in Afghanistan last night and would be flown to South Korea soon.

Meanwhile, government officials sought to dispel fears that its symbolic concessions to the extremist group may have damaged its global diplomatic standing.

"For us, the paramount task was to save the lives of the hostages," said Cheon Ho-seon, Roh's spokesperson. "We believe it is any country's responsibility to respond with flexibility to save lives as long as you don't depart too far from the principles and practice of the international community."

From the Star's wire services

Ordeal ends for South Korean church worker who was one of 12 hostages freed by their Taliban captors in Afghanistan after six weeks of uncertainty

IDNUMBER 200708300092

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star

DATE: 2007.08.30

EDITION: Ont

SECTION: World And Comment

PAGE: AA01

ILLUSTRATION: AHMAD MASOOD reuters A South Korean hostage waves from a Red Cross vehicle after being released in the Afghan city of Ghazni yesterday. Taliban insurgents freed 12 hostages yesterday and are expected to release the remaining seven today. ;

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation

WORD COUNT: 46

AHMAD MASOOD reuters A South Korean hostage waves from a Red Cross vehicle after being released in the Afghan city of Ghazni yesterday. Taliban insurgents freed 12 hostages yesterday and are expected to release the remaining seven today.

Canadian forces probe death of soldier

IDNUMBER 200708300088
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A21
BYLINE: Martin Ouellet
SOURCE: CANADIAN PRESS
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 164

A member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

A military statement said the soldier, serving at the headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, died yesterday shortly after 7: 30 a.m. local time.

He had been found seriously injured in his room an hour earlier. Doctors were unable to save him.

The soldier's name was being temporarily withheld at the family's request. The military has not released his age, hometown, rank, military base or regiment.

Military officials have ruled out enemy action, saying the shooting occurred within the NATO compound.

"The investigation has just started and all possibilities will be considered, " said Capt. Sylvain Chalifour, a spokesperson for the Canadian Forces.

Investigators are looking at the possibility of suicide but aren't ruling out homicide or a firearms accident.

The death brings to 70 the number of Canadian soldiers who have died in Afghanistan since 2002. That toll includes two past shootings ruled accidental.

Most of Canada's 2,500 soldiers in Afghanistan are based in Kandahar but about 100 work at the NATO headquarters in Kabul, doing administrative work and support for the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai.

Ottawa vague on S. Korea decision

IDNUMBER 200708300087
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: World And Comment
PAGE: AA03
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 107

The Canadian government refused to say yesterday whether it supports South Korea's decision to negotiate a hostage release with the Taliban.

With a presence in Afghanistan that comprises 2,300 soldiers, as well as development officials, diplomats, and non-government workers, Canada reacted cautiously to the news.

So cautiously that it took Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier's office seven hours to prepare a response to a question about whether Canada agreed with South Korea's handling of the crisis.

Finally came a two-part reply to questions that were never asked. Bernier's office replied that: Canada opposes murder and hostage-taking and Canada is unaware of specific terms of the deal between South Korea and the Taliban.

Senator calls for choppers

IDNUMBER 200708300058
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B12
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 578

OTTAWA — The head of the Senate's defence committee is calling on the government and the military to immediately send Griffon helicopters to Afghanistan as part of an effort to cut down on casualties.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny says the use of the choppers as resupply transports would reduce the time troops spend operating ground-supply convoys that are highly vulnerable to insurgent attacks and IEDs — improvised explosive devices.

IEDs are seen as the main threat to soldiers on the ground at this point, he added.

Troops can be particularly vulnerable to such attacks as they travel in ground convoys to resupply forward operating bases. Military officers see more use of helicopters to move supplies and personnel as one of the solutions in reducing that exposure to IEDs.

Canada is currently in negotiations to purchase medium-lift Chinook choppers from the U.S. but those aircraft might not be available until 2011.

But Kenny says Canada has an existing fleet of smaller Griffon choppers that could be used in Afghanistan. "Obviously the Griffons won't be able to carry as much as a Chinook, but they can still play a role in moving some equipment and reducing some of the exposure of supply columns to IEDs," he said. "Any amount counts."

"Why isn't that being done?" Kenny asked. "Why do we have 76 Griffons still sitting here in Canada?"

Defence department spokeswoman Sarah Kavanagh said the current Afghanistan mission requires a medium-lift helicopter able to carry sufficient numbers of personnel, up to 30 at a time, or an appropriate amount of cargo and equipment.

"The role of the Griffon is not intended to fill the role of a medium-lift helicopter and at this time there is no intent to deploy the Griffon to Afghanistan," said Kavanagh.

But she added: "While the performance characteristics of the Griffon are not ideally suited to the environment in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces continues to monitor the evolution of operations in that theatre to determine if there may be an appropriate role for the Griffon in the future."

U.S. and Dutch Chinook helicopters are currently available in southern Afghanistan but they are much sought after by various forces in the region. The Canadian Forces used to operate Chinooks but the Conservative

government sold them off in the early 1990s as a cost-cutting measure.

Kenny, however, said that while the Griffon carries less than the Chinook, any difference could be made up by operating more of the smaller helicopters. He said 18 of the Griffons should be sent over to Kandahar as soon as possible.

According to figures provided by the Canadian Forces, the Griffon can carry its crew as well as 10 passengers. It has been used in domestic missions as well as overseas on operations such as in Haiti. It has armour lining both the floor and the crew seats, according to the military, and the chopper can reach speeds of up to 260 km/h.

The Canadian American Strategic Review, a defence-oriented Internet site operated out of Simon Fraser University, points out that until July 2006 the U.S. Marines flew convoy escort duties from Kandahar airfield in Huey helicopters. Those choppers are similar to the Griffons but less powerful, the site adds. It also questioned why the marines can operate such choppers when the Canadian Forces considers the local conditions in Kandahar too extreme for the Griffons.

The Canadian American Strategic Review also suggests that the reason the Griffons are not being sent is because the Canadian Forces fear that deploying helicopters to Kandahar would take the pressure off politicians to approve future equipment purchases.

Military to investigate death

IDNUMBER 200708300057
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B12
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 321

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died Wednesday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. local time, after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him but he died around 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," said Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour added.

The spokesman declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul on Wednesday, and the room has been sealed off, he said. A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar province as part of another operation that supports the NATO-led coalition.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002. Most of the troops have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual, non-combat circumstances.

Judging by past investigations into such incidents, it could be months before light is shed on Wednesday's death.

Last August, Master Cpl. Jeffrey Walsh, a native of Regina, was accidentally shot by a fellow Canadian soldier while they were on patrol in a G-wagon vehicle.

Diplomat opposes legal crop

IDNUMBER 200708300056
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B12
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 384

OTTAWA — Britain's top diplomat in Canada has dismissed a poll, commissioned by the international think-tank that is championing the legalization of Afghanistan's contentious opium poppy crop, which shows Canadians' overwhelming support the use of Afghan opium for medicinal purposes.

"It is a surprise that people reach for silver bullets," British High Commissioner Anthony Cary said in an interview Wednesday.

Cary was responding to the release of an Ipsos Reid survey of 1,000 Canadians, conducted on behalf of the Senlis Council, which found that nearly eight in 10 Canadians (79 per cent) want Prime Minister Stephen Harper to get behind an international pilot project that would help transform Afghanistan's illicit opium cultivation into a legal source for codeine, morphine and other legitimate pain medications for the international market.

The poll release comes two days after the United Nations' latest audit of the poppy farming trade found that Afghanistan's production of opium, the key ingredient in heroin, has reached record levels in the six years that western nations have controlled the country.

Britain is a key Canadian ally in southern Afghanistan. It is responsible for Helmand Province, where the UN report found that poppy cultivation has increased 48 per cent, making it a bigger opium producer than any other single country in the world.

In neighbouring Kandahar province, where Canada's 2,500 troops are stationed, poppy cultivation rose by 32 per cent, the UN study found.

Cary noted that while opium production has been licensed in such places as Thailand and Turkey, it took 15 years to achieve such a system. Afghanistan simply lacks the infrastructure and regulatory framework to cultivate opium legally and to keep it out of the hands of drug dealers, he said.

The European-funded Senlis Council, headed by Canadian lawyer Norine MacDonald, has been a longtime proponent of legalizing Afghanistan's massive poppy-farming and opium-cultivation trade. Their proposals are widely rejected by the United Nations, NATO and their various western allies. The Canadian government and other western allies also oppose the legalization of the opium trade on grounds that the Afghan government in Kabul views it as un-Islamic.

This week, the UN said for the first time that the illicit trade is directly linked to funding of the Taliban insurgency that threatens Canada and its military allies.

MacDonald suggested the anti-drug policies of the United States are being foisted on the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Taliban releases 12 hostages

IDNUMBER 200708300022
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Yousuf Azimy
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 336

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — Taliban insurgents freed 12 South Korean hostages in Afghanistan on Wednesday, a day after reaching a deal with Korean and Indonesian negotiators on the release of the 19 Christian volunteers.

Three South Korean women were released first, followed by four women and a man — handed over to members of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Ghazni province, Reuters witnesses said.

A third batch comprising three women and a man were released later on Wednesday, they said.

Wearing long, traditional headscarves, the three women who were first to be freed wept as they sat in an ICRC vehicle.

A Taliban spokesman, Qari Mohammad Yousuf, said by telephone he expected all of the hostages to be free by Thursday.

The insurgents seized 23 Korean Christian volunteers on July 19 from a bus in Ghazni province and initially demanded the release of Taliban members held prisoner by the Afghan government.

Two male hostages were killed by their captors early on in the crisis. The Taliban released two women as a gesture of goodwill during an initial round of talks and said on Tuesday they had reached a deal on the release of the remaining 19.

A Taliban representative said on Wednesday they dropped the demand for Taliban prisoners to be released after they realized South Korea could not force the Afghan government to free anyone.

South Korea's presidential Blue House said the final agreement was on condition it withdraw its troops from Afghanistan within the year and stopped its nationals doing missionary work in Afghanistan.

However, South Korea had already decided before the crisis to withdraw its contingent of about 200 engineers and medical staff from Afghanistan by the end of 2007. Since the hostages were taken it has banned its nationals from travelling there.

A spokesman for South Korea's president, Chon Ho-seon, did not respond to questions at a news briefing in Seoul on Wednesday on whether a ransom was part of the deal but said South Korea had done what was needed.

"We believe it is any country's responsibility to respond with flexibility to save lives as long as you don't depart too far from the principles and practice of the international community," Chon said.

Military to probe soldier's death in Kabul; Man found in his room apparently not victim of 'hostile action'

IDNUMBER 200708300056
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 318

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Military to probe soldier's death in Kabul; Man found in his room apparently not victim of 'hostile action'

have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual, non-combat circumstances.

Judging by past investigations into such incidents, it could be months before light is shed on yesterday's death.

Canada's military commitment in Afghanistan ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he will seek the consensus of Parliament before extending the mission.

No to Afghan combat mission

IDNUMBER 200708300043
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Cpl. Dan Pop, DND, CanWest News Service / Canadiansoldiers greet Afghan children during a patrol in Kandahar City. Letter-writers say Canada should withdraw its troops from the country. ;
BYLINE: J. Graeme Gardiner
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 132

Before the U.S. intervened in Afghanistan in the late 1970s, that country was not a failed state and harboured no international terrorists.

Zbigniew Brezinski, foreign policy adviser to then-president Jimmy Carter, drew up the covert plan to mobilize Islamic fundamentalist mujahedin to topple the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan and draw the Soviet Union into a ruinous war in that country. Afghanistan was then left in a state of devastation. Into this mess came the Taliban.

We are allying ourselves with U.S. foreign policy that since the Second World War has included about 55 foreign interventions, 35 assassination plots, 25 bombing campaigns and the perversion of 25 foreign elections.

Yet the number of Canadian United Nations peacekeepers deployed today could fit into a school bus.

This travesty is wrong for Canada and wrong for the world.

J. Graeme Gardiner,

Sidney.

Time to get out of Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708300042
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
BYLINE: Alan Randell
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 34

Re: "War effort hurt by drug strategy," editorial, Aug. 29.

Canada has zero leverage here. The Americans are calling the shots in Afghanistan, so Canada can either get with the program or leave.

I vote for leaving.

Alan Randell,

Victoria.

Taliban release dozen South Korean hostages

IDNUMBER 200708300029
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Ahmad Masood, Reuters / South Korean hostages are escorted in the city of Ghazni, Afghanistan, after being released yesterday. Taliban insurgents freed 12 South Korean hostages in three separate batches yesterday, the first of 19 Christian volunteers the Taliban agreed to release. ;
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 214

GHAZNI, Afghanistan (AFP) — The Taliban freed 12 of their 19 South Korean captives yesterday as the wrenching six-week hostage crisis in Afghanistan neared resolution.

The Islamic extremist movement handed over 10 women and two men to tribal elders in three separate releases several hours apart outside the central town of Ghazni. The aid workers were then driven to safety in Red Cross vehicles.

International Committee of the Red Cross representative Greg Muller confirmed that 12 hostages had been released and taken to the Red Crescent Society offices in Ghazni, 140 kilometres south of Kabul.

Many of the freed women were wearing colourful headscarves and some appeared to be in tears. They covered their faces as they were bundled into Red Cross vehicles. A bearded male hostage grinned broadly.

The freed hostages were among 23 Christian aid workers kidnapped by Taliban militants on July 19. Two male captives were executed by their captors and two female hostages were freed earlier this month.

The South Korean Embassy in Kabul said the freed hostages were likely to be flown to the U.S. military base at Bagram, north of Kabul, before leaving Afghanistan "as soon as possible."

Yesterday's releases came a day after the Taliban announced it would free all the hostages in the wake of South Korea's pledge to withdraw its military force from Afghanistan and ban missionary groups from the country.

U.K. diplomat scoffs at idea of legalizing Afghan opium

IDNUMBER 200708300015
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 266

OTTAWA —Britain's top diplomat in Canada has dismissed a poll, commissioned by the international think-tank that is championing the legalization of Afghanistan's contentious opium poppy crop, that shows Canadians overwhelmingly support for the use of Afghan opium for medicinal purposes.

"It is a surprise that people reach for silver bullets," British High Commissioner Anthony Cary said in an interview yesterday.

Cary was responding to the release of an Ipsos Reid survey of 1,000 Canadians, conducted on behalf of the Senlis Council, which found that nearly eight in 10 Canadians want Prime Minister Stephen Harper to get behind an international pilot project that would help transform Afghanistan's illicit opium cultivation into a legal source for codeine, morphine and other legitimate pain medications.

The poll release comes two days after the United Nations' latest audit of the poppy farming trade found that Afghanistan's production of opium, the key ingredient in heroin, has reached record levels in the six years that western nations have controlled the country.

Britain is a key Canadian ally in southern Afghanistan. It is responsible for Helmand province, where the UN report found that poppy cultivation has increased 48 per cent, making it a bigger opium producer than any other single country in the world.

In neighbouring Kandahar province, where Canada's 2,500 troops are stationed, poppy cultivation rose by 32 per cent, the UN study found.

Cary noted that while opium production has been licensed in Thailand and Turkey, it took 15 years to achieve such a system. Afghanistan lacks the infrastructure and regulatory framework to cultivate opium legally and to keep it out of the hands of drug dealers, he said.

Senator pushes to send choppers to Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708300014
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: DND, CanWest News Service / Members of the Canadian Special Operations Force Command are transported in a Griffon helicopter during training near Kamloops last year. The head of the Senate defence committee is urging the military to deploy the helicopters to Afghanistan in a bid to cut down on casualties. ;

DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 289

OTTAWA — The head of the Senate's defence committee is calling on the government and the military to immediately send Griffon helicopters to Afghanistan as part of an effort to cut down on casualties.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny says the use of the choppers as resupply transports would reduce the time troops spend operating ground-supply convoys that are highly vulnerable to insurgent attacks and IEDs — improvised explosive devices.

IEDs are seen as the main threat to soldiers on the ground at this point, he added.

Troops can be particularly vulnerable to such attacks as they travel in ground convoys to resupply forward operating bases. Military officers see more use of helicopters to move supplies and personnel as one of the solutions in reducing that exposure to IEDs.

Canada is in negotiations to purchase medium-lift Chinook choppers from the U.S. but those aircraft might not be available until 2011.

"Obviously the Griffons won't be able to carry as much as a Chinook, but they can still play a role in moving some equipment and reducing some of the exposure of supply columns" to IEDs," Kenny said. "Any amount counts."

"Why isn't that being done?" Kenny asked. "Why do we have 76 Griffons still sitting here in Canada?"

Defence Department spokeswoman Sarah Kavanagh said the Afghanistan mission requires a medium-lift helicopter able to carry sufficient numbers of personnel, up to 30 at a time, or an appropriate amount of cargo and equipment.

"The role of the Griffon is not intended to fill the role of a medium-lift helicopter and at this time there is no intent to deploy the Griffon to Afghanistan," said Kavanagh.

But she added: "While the performance characteristics of the Griffon are not ideally suited to the environment in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces continues to monitor the evolution of operations in that theatre to determine if there may be an appropriate role for the Griffon in the future."

Few details into death of soldier in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708300072
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: B8
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 430

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died Wednesday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesperson Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. local time, after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him, but he died around 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," said Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour added.

The spokesperson declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul on Wednesday, and the room has been sealed off, he said.

A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar province as part of another operation that supports the NATO-led coalition.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002. Most of the troops have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual,

non-combat circumstances.

Judging by past investigations into such incidents, it could be months before light is shed on Wednesday's death.

Last August, Master Cpl. Jeffrey Walsh, a native of Regina, was accidentally shot by a fellow Canadian soldier while they were on patrol in a G-wagon vehicle. Walsh's family claimed the military kept them in the dark for eight months. The soldier who shot Walsh, Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser, was charged with manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in March.

This spring, Cpl. Kevin Megeney was accidentally shot in the chest while in his tent at Kandahar Airfield. The Canadian Forces National Investigation Service is still looking into the incident. The service is usually called in when military police suspect there has been a serious breach of the military's code of conduct or that a criminal offence has been committed.

Canada's military commitment in Afghanistan ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he will seek the consensus of Parliament before extending the mission.

West's take on Afghanistan defies logic; Following is the viewpoint of the writer, a resident of Saskatoon.

IDNUMBER 200708300046
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Forum
PAGE: A11
BYLINE: A. Hamid Javed
SOURCE: Special to The StarPhoenix
WORD COUNT: 342

In a report, "Who are the Militants in Afghanistan?" broadcast by BBC on Aug. 18, Pam O'Tool reported a huge increase in violent attacks recently and said the Hamid Karzai government blames everything on the "enemies of Afghanistan."

Her report is quite accurate, but like the reports of her western media colleagues, O'Tool's view is coloured through western lenses.

If we were able to hear the other side, most Afghans consider Karzai a sellout and a traitor to Afghanistan, who was put in by the U.S. and is propped up by NATO armed forces.

Without the military force of the West, this "Mayor of Kabul" truly wouldn't last a day even in that city.

None of us, however, questions the reasoning of the western media. Hundreds of militants reportedly are being killed every week, and yet the combatants keep coming on strong.

So, either the reports of the numerous insurgent deaths are wrong (they are supposed to be a small group separate from the population at large, which wants the western soldiers to remain in Afghanistan) or it's the general population that's up in arms against an invading force (NATO), and the determination and supply of fighters is inexhaustible.

According to O'Tool, the UN envoy to Afghanistan, Tom Koenig, recently alleged that Taliban and Al-Qaida are being backed by foreign money and a terror network.

Is it conceivable that a big majority of Afghans may be looking at NATO as the biggest terrorist group in their country and consider Koenig as the tool of the West and not a representative of a UN that includes all?

He himself acknowledged that the insurgents include the children of Afghans growing up in Pakistan.

Some say the Taliban's current strength is because they intimidate the population -- the same population that could not be intimidated by the brutal Soviet military for a decade, or by the massive bombing by the U.S. air force, or by the far "superior" and supposedly larger military force of NATO?

Then we blame the warlords, the druglords, the mullahs, the Muslims, the Islamists (whatever that is) Islam, the Pakistanis, the Hizb-e-Islami, the former mujahedeen. Everybody else in the world except us! Are we making any sense at all, to ourselves or to anybody?

West's take on Afghanistan defies logic; Following is the viewpoint of the writer, a resident of Saskatoon.

Send Griffons to Afghanistan: senator; Small choppers could save soldier's lives, committee hears

IDNUMBER 200708300022
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: National
PAGE: A8
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: DND / The CH-146 Griffon Helicopter could reduce exposure of supply columns to IEDs ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 542

OTTAWA -- The head of the Senate's defence committee is calling on the government and the military to immediately send Griffon helicopters to Afghanistan as part of an effort to cut down on casualties.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny says the use of the choppers as resupply transports would reduce the time troops spend operating ground-supply convoys that are highly vulnerable to insurgent attacks and IEDs -- improvised explosive devices.

IEDs are seen as the main threat to soldiers on the ground at this point, he added.

Troops can be particularly vulnerable to such attacks as they travel in ground convoys to resupply forward operating bases. Military officers see more use of helicopters to move supplies and personnel as one of the solutions in reducing that exposure to IEDs.

Canada is currently in negotiations to purchase medium-lift Chinook choppers from the U.S., but those aircraft might not be available until 2011.

But Kenny says Canada has an existing fleet of smaller Griffon choppers that could be used in Afghanistan. "Obviously the Griffons won't be able to carry as much as a Chinook, but they can still play a role in moving some equipment and reducing some of the exposure of supply columns to IEDs," he said. "Any amount counts.

"Why isn't that being done?" Kenny asked. "Why do we have 76 Griffons still sitting here in Canada?"

Defence Department spokesperson Sarah Kavanagh said the current Afghanistan mission requires a medium-lift helicopter able to carry sufficient numbers of personnel, up to 30 at a time, or an appropriate amount of cargo and equipment.

"The role of the Griffon is not intended to fill the role of a medium-lift helicopter and at this time there is no intent to deploy the Griffon to Afghanistan," said Kavanagh.

But she added: "While the performance characteristics of the Griffon are not ideally suited to the environment in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces continues to monitor the evolution of operations in that theatre to

determine if there may be an appropriate role for the Griffon in the future."

U.S. and Dutch Chinook helicopters are currently available in southern Afghanistan but they are much sought after by various forces in the region. The Canadian Forces used to operate Chinooks but the Conservative government sold them off in the early 1990s as a cost-cutting measure.

Kenny, however, said that while the Griffon carries less than the Chinook, any difference could be made up by operating more of the smaller helicopters. He said 18 of the Griffons should be sent over to Kandahar as soon as possible.

According to figures provided by the Canadian Forces, the Griffon can carry its crew as well as 10 passengers. It has been used in domestic missions as well as overseas on operations such as in Haiti. It has armour lining both the floor and the crew seats, according to the military, and the chopper can reach speeds of up to 260 km/h.

The Canadian American Strategic Review, a defence-oriented Internet site operated out of Simon Fraser University, points out that until July 2006 the U.S. Marines flew convoy escort duties from Kandahar airfield in Huey helicopters. Those choppers are similar to the Griffons but less powerful, the site adds. It also questioned why the marines can operate such choppers when the Canadian Forces considers the local conditions in Kandahar too extreme for the Griffons.

Out of uniform

IDNUMBER 200708300057
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A12
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 248

Gen. Pervez Musharraf's khaki uniform has proven to be a kind of second skin, so reports that he's getting ready to resign as head of Pakistan's army show just how much pressure he's under. That pressure is good for Pakistan.

Governments are supposed to control armies, not the other way around. Pakistan cannot join the cause of freedom and security until it leaves the military coup of 1999 behind, and puts the foundations of democracy in place. That means that if Gen. Musharraf wants to continue as president, he must resign his military position.

Western governments have tolerated Musharraf's dictatorship, especially since 2001, because he was — is — better than the Islamist alternatives. The war in Afghanistan makes it all the more important for NATO members to have neighbouring Pakistan on their side.

But those governments are losing patience with him. And with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto breathing down his neck, Gen. Musharraf is running out of time.

His decision to relinquish his army role will not alter the fact that he has proven unwilling or unable to crack down on the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in his country; nor will it turn Pakistan into an electoral democracy.

But it's a first step, and it shows that the general is finally becoming sensitive to international opinion and domestic realities. It also shows that Pakistan might be ready to move into a more stable and a more democratic future.

Views of Ottawa

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Canadian soldier found shot in his room; 'All options are open' as Forces investigate cause of death

IDNUMBER 200708300026
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 282

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died yesterday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

He was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. local time after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him, but he died around 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," said Capt. Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of a weapon. It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Capt. Chalifour added.

He declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul yesterday, and the room has been sealed off, he said. A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar province as part of another operation that supports the NATO-led coalition.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Judging by past investigations into such incidents, it could be months before light is shed yesterday's death.

Canadians back legalizing opium trade: poll; 80% support project to use abundant crop for legal pain drugs

IDNUMBER 200708300025
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Darko Zeljkovic, NOMAD / Afghan farmers harvest opium in a poppy field near Kandahar. The country's opium production has reached record levels. ;
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 244

A new poll commissioned by the international think-tank that is championing the legalization of Afghanistan's contentious opium poppy crop shows overwhelming Canadian support for the proposal.

The Ipsos Reid survey of 1,000 Canadians conducted on behalf of the Senlis Council found that eight in 10 want Prime Minister Stephen Harper to get behind an international pilot project that would help transform Afghanistan's illicit opium cultivation into a legal way of providing codeine and other legitimate pain drugs to the international market.

The release of the poll yesterday comes two days after the United Nations' latest audit of the poppy farming trade found that Afghanistan's production of opium, the key ingredient in heroin, has now reached record levels in the six years that western nations have controlled the country.

This week, the UN said for the first time that the illicit trade is directly linked to funding of the Taliban insurgency that threatens Canada and its military allies.

The poll also found that 82 per cent of respondents opposed the U.S.-led policy of chemical spraying to eradicate poppies, while seven of 10 said they would be willing to use "fair trade" Afghan-made morphine, as long as it conformed to international standards.

"Prime Minister Harper has to listen to Canadian people who are looking for a common-sense solution," Norine MacDonald, head of the Senlis Council told a news conference yesterday, where she unveiled her organization's findings.

She urged the government to move quickly because the next Afghan poppy planting season begins in October.

The Liberal opposition supports the Senlis proposal as a sound alternative to the poppy problem.

More choppers, fewer casualties: senator; Kenny wants Griffon fleet to be used instead of vulnerable ground convoys

IDNUMBER 200708300024

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen

DATE: 2007.08.30

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A5

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Sgt. Donald Clark, Army News / Canadian troops prepare to rappel from a CH-146 Griffon helicopter during a training exercise in B.C. Canada is currently negotiating to purchase medium-lift Chinook helicopters from the U.S., but they might not be available until 2011. Liberal Senator Colin Kenny says Canada's existing fleet of Griffon helicopters could be put to good use in Afghanistan. ;

BYLINE: David Pugliese

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen

WORD COUNT: 568

The head of the Senate's defence committee is calling on the government and the military to immediately send Griffon helicopters to Afghanistan as part of an effort to cut down on casualties.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny says the use of the choppers as resupply transports would reduce the time troops spend operating ground supply convoys that are highly vulnerable to insurgent attacks and improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. IEDs are seen as the main threat to soldiers on the ground at this point, he said.

Troops can be particularly vulnerable to such attacks as they travel in ground convoys to resupply forward operating bases. Military officers see more use of helicopters to move supplies and personnel as one of the solutions in reducing that exposure to IEDs.

Canada is currently in negotiations to buy medium-lift Chinook choppers from the U.S., but those aircraft might not be available until 2011.

But Mr. Kenny says Canada has an existing fleet of smaller Griffon choppers that could be used in Afghanistan. "Obviously the Griffons won't be able to carry as much as a Chinook, but they can still play a role in moving some equipment and reducing some of the exposure of supply columns to IEDs," he said. "Any amount counts."

"Why isn't that being done?" Mr. Kenny asked. "Why do we have 76 Griffons still sitting here in Canada?"

Defence Department spokeswoman Sarah Kavanagh said the current Afghanistan mission requires a medium-lift helicopter able to carry sufficient numbers of personnel, up to 30 at a time, or an appropriate amount of cargo and equipment.

"The role of the Griffon is not intended to fill the role of a medium-lift helicopter, and at this time there is no intent to deploy the Griffon to Afghanistan," said Miss Kavanagh. But, she added, "While the performance characteristics of the Griffon are not ideally suited to the environment in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces continues to monitor the evolution of operations in that theatre to determine if there may be an appropriate

More choppers, fewer casualties: senator; Kenny wants Griffon fleet to be used instead of vulnerable ground

role for the Griffon in the future."

U.S. and Dutch Chinooks are currently available in southern Afghanistan, but they are much sought after by various forces in the region. The Canadian Forces used to operate Chinooks, but the Conservative government sold them off in the early 1990s as a cost-cutting measure. Mr. Kenny said that while the Griffon carries less than the Chinook, any difference could be made up by operating more of the smaller helicopters. He said 18 of the Griffons should be sent over to Kandahar as soon as possible.

"I'm of the view that anything that can be done to reduce casualties and provide the necessary equipment should be tried," said Mr. Kenny, whose committee has been supportive of additional equipment and personnel for the military.

According to figures provided by the Canadian Forces, the Griffon can carry its crew as well as 10 passengers. It has been used in domestic missions as well as overseas on operations such as in Haiti. It has armour lining the floor and the crew seats, according to the military, and the chopper can reach speeds of up to 260 km/h.

Canada is spending \$4.7 billion on 16 Chinook helicopters, but negotiations with aerospace firm Boeing are still ongoing. The Canadian Forces expects the first Chinooks to arrive in 2011, although the Defence Department is trying to arrange for a faster delivery by acquiring choppers earmarked for the U.S. military.

Think-tank questions effectiveness of development cash in Afghanistan; Funds might be better spent improving dilapidated hospital in the troubled south, Senlis Council says

IDNUMBER 200708300083
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B8
KEYWORDS: !@DATELINE=OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 574

OTTAWA – Only a half hour drive from the state-of-the-art health care offered at the main military base at Kandahar Air Field, the Mirwais Hospital — the main regional medical facility in southern Afghanistan — sat, earlier this month, in dilapidated ruin.

It is not at all certain "it deserves the name of hospital," Norine MacDonald, the Canadian head of the Senlis Council think-tank, said Wednesday.

A video presentation on Wednesday in Ottawa said little surgery beyond coping with war-related bombing tragedies takes place there.

Major laboratory work is sent to the capital Kabul or out of country to Pakistan, the bed linens are rarely cleaned, there is no food service or nutritionist and, when patients needs drugs, the doctors often pay for them out of their own pockets.

More troubling perhaps for Canadian taxpayers — not to mention military families — the Senlis Council found no sign of two major projects, with price tags of more than \$13 million, that had been trumpeted by the Canadian International Development Agency when it visited Mirwais earlier this month.

"It really points to the need for a dramatic overhaul," MacDonald said Wednesday, as she proposed that the run-down hospital "might in some way be adopted by the Canadian medical community and that it could really be made a showcase of Canada's commitment to the people of Kandahar."

The state of Mirwais Hospital was a focal point of the London-based organization's criticism of the pace of CIDA's development efforts in southern Afghanistan, criticism dismissed by CIDA as distorted and inaccurate.

CIDA contributions to the hospital this year totalled \$3 million, through the International Committee of the Red Cross and another \$350,000 through the United Nations Children's Fund for maternity care, according to an Aug. 20 e-mail by Michel de Salaberry, Foreign Affairs' new senior civilian co-

ordinator to the Senlis Council that it released as part of its report.

Think-tank questions effectiveness of development cash in Afghanistan; Funds might be better spent improving

In addition, new CIDA minister Bev Oda announced last week that Canada was donating another \$10 million through UNICEF for maternal and infant health care, as part of \$45 million in funding to development projects.

MacDonald said that when she led a Senlis team to the hospital on Aug. 2 to look for evidence of the Canadian spending, hospital administrators told her that none of the ICRC funds had shown up, and there was no evidence -- beyond an empty tent on hospital grounds -- of any maternity program.

Canada has earmarked \$1.2 billion in development spending to Afghanistan for 2001–11.

All of the money is filtered through international organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Committee of the Red Cross among others, and is spent all across Afghanistan, not just in the south where Canada's military efforts are focused.

A livid CIDA official said Wednesday after the Senlis presentation that "this hospital needs help," but he accused Senlis of distorting facts, and rejecting explanations for how past Canadian money has been spent and who is responsible for delivering aid directly to the hospital.

The official said the \$350,000 spent so far has gone to train maternal health-care workers and that the \$10 million earmarked to UNICEF last week would go towards improving obstetric care, nursing, midwifery and improving care to sick children throughout the south.

The CIDA official said the ICRC is primarily responsible for improving the quality of care at the hospital and is now in a better position to do so after signing a new agreement with Afghanistan's health ministry earlier this summer.

The official also disputed the Senlis claim that no one from his department had been to the hospital.

The official said he, in fact, has visited personally as have several diplomatic and military staff.

"We've been very keen to support the hospital," the official said.

"We're playing a supporting role."

Medical poppy cultivation in Afghanistan OK: poll

IDNUMBER 200708300027
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
KEYWORDS: WAR; DRUGS; FARMERS & FARMING; TERRORISM
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 420

OTTAWA – A new poll commissioned by the international think-tank that is championing the legalization of Afghanistan's contentious opium poppy crop shows overwhelming Canadian support for the proposal.

The Ipsos Reid survey of 1,000 Canadians conducted on behalf of the Senlis Council found that nearly eight in 10 Canadians (79 per cent) want Prime Minister Stephen Harper to get behind an international pilot project that would help transform Afghanistan's illicit opium cultivation into a legal way of providing codeine and other legitimate pain medications to the international market.

The release of the poll Wednesday comes two days after the United Nations' latest audit of the poppy farming trade found that Afghanistan's production of opium, the key ingredient in heroin, has now reached record levels in the six years that western nations have controlled the country.

In Kandahar province, where Canada's 2,500 troops are stationed, opium production rose by 32 per cent, the UN study found.

The European-funded Senlis Council, headed by Canadian lawyer Norine MacDonald, is a longtime proponent of legalizing Afghanistan's massive poppy-farming and opium-cultivation trade. Their proposals are widely rejected by the United Nations, NATO and their various western allies. This week, the UN said for the first time that the illicit trade is directly linked to funding of the Taliban insurgency that threatens Canada and its military allies.

The Canadian government, along with its western allies, rejects the legalization of the opium trade, in part because the Afghan government in Kabul views it as un-Islamic.

MacDonald suggested the anti-drug policies of the United States were being foisted upon the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

"We don't believe the Afghan government is a free agent in this regard," she said.

The Senlis survey, conducted by the same Toronto-based polling firm used by the CanWest News Service, shows overwhelming support for legalizing the Afghan poppy in Canada.

The poll, conducted Aug. 14–16, also found that 82 per cent of respondents opposed the U.S.-led policy of chemical spraying to eradicate poppies, while seven of 10 respondents said they would be willing to use "fair trade" Afghan-made morphine, as long as it conformed to international standards. The survey has a margin of error of 3.1 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

"Prime Minister Harper has to listen to Canadian people who are looking for a common-sense solution," MacDonald told a news conference in Ottawa Wednesday, where she unveiled her organization's findings. She urged the government to move quickly on the issue because the next Afghan poppy planting season begins in October.

The Liberal opposition supports the Senlis proposal as a sound alternative to the poppy problem.

Senator wants choppers deployed to Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708300019
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Journal Stock / Liberal Senator Colin Kenny;
KEYWORDS: LAWS & REGULATIONS; SENATORS
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 304

OTTAWA – The head of the Senate's defence committee is calling on the government and the military to immediately send Griffon helicopters to Afghanistan as part of an effort to cut down on casualties.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny says the use of the choppers as resupply transports would reduce the time troops spend operating ground–supply convoys that are highly vulnerable to insurgent attacks and IEDs — improvised explosive devices.

IEDs are seen as the main threat to soldiers on the ground at this point, he added.

Troops can be particularly vulnerable to such attacks as they travel in ground convoys to resupply forward operating bases. Military officers see more use of helicopters to move supplies and personnel as one of the solutions in reducing that exposure to IEDs.

Canada is currently in negotiations to purchase medium–lift Chinook choppers from the U.S. but those aircraft might not be available until 2011.

But Kenny says Canada has an existing fleet of smaller Griffon choppers that could be used in Afghanistan. "Obviously the Griffons won't be able to carry as much as a Chinook, but they can still play a role in moving some equipment and reducing some of the exposure of supply columns" to IEDs, he said. "Any amount counts."

"Why isn't that being done?" Kenny asked. "Why do we have 76 Griffons still sitting here in Canada?"

Defence department spokeswoman Sarah Kavanagh said the current Afghanistan mission requires a medium–lift helicopter able to carry sufficient numbers of personnel, up to 30 at a time, or an appropriate amount of cargo and equipment.

"The role of the Griffon is not intended to fill the role of a medium–lift helicopter and at this time there is no intent to deploy the Griffon to Afghanistan," said Kavanagh.

Kenny, however, said that while the Griffon carries less than the Chinook, any difference could be made up by operating more of the smaller helicopters. He said 18 of the Griffons should be sent over to Kandahar as soon as possible.

Military to probe soldier's death in Kabul; Canadian man serving with NATO found shot in his room

IDNUMBER 200708300011
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
KEYWORDS: WAR; FOREIGN RELATIONS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 210

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died Wednesday after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. Kabul time, after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him but he died an hour later.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military and the International Security Assistance Force — the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature of the death nor the events surrounding it," said Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour said. He declined to give any information on the soldier, including his age and rank, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Taliban release 12 South Korean hostages amid r; Deal brokered by Afghan elders, Red Cross; remaining seven likely to be freed today

IDNUMBER 200708300010
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
KEYWORDS: WAR; HOSTAGES; FOREIGN AID; TERRORISM; AFGHANISTAN
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
SOURCE: New York Times
WORD COUNT: 515

KABUL, Afghanistan – Bringing a six-week hostage ordeal closer to an end, the Taliban released 12 of 19 remaining South Korean hostages on Wednesday. The seven still in Taliban custody were widely expected to be released Thursday.

The hostages who were freed appeared to be in good health, according to Afghan tribal elders and Red Cross officials who helped obtain their freedom. The 12 Koreans, who had been held in separate locations, were released in three stages in Ghazni province, in central Afghanistan.

"They are in Ghazni city," Haji Zaher, a local elder, said in a phone interview. "They were healthy and very happy."

After weeks of sporadic negotiations, a South Korean delegation and Taliban officials brokered an agreement on Tuesday for the hostages' release. South Korea reaffirmed a pledge to withdraw its 200 troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year, as previously planned, and agreed to prevent evangelical activities here by South Korean churches.

The Taliban dropped a demand that eight senior Taliban prisoners be released in exchange for the Koreans. Speculation was rife in Kabul on Wednesday that the South Korean government had paid a huge ransom for the hostages, a step that Afghan officials said would encourage the kidnapping of foreigners. Taliban and South Korean officials denied that a ransom was paid.

Afghanistan's commerce minister warned that South Korea's agreement could embolden the Taliban, The Associated Press reported.

"One has to say that this release under these conditions will make our difficulties in Afghanistan even bigger," Amin Farhang, the commerce minister, told Bayerischer Rundfunk radio in Germany. "We fear that this decision could become a precedent. The Taliban will continue trying to take hostages to attain their aims in Afghanistan."

The 19 hostages were part of a group of 23 Christian volunteers kidnapped by the Taliban on July 19, while they were travelling by public bus from Kabul to the former Taliban stronghold of Kandahar. Few foreigners travel that route by car or public bus because it is considered extremely dangerous.

The Taliban killed two men in the group when their demands were not met but released two women this month after South Korea entered direct negotiations. The International Red Cross said that the hostages were getting medical evaluations Wednesday night in Afghanistan and that they would be flown soon to South Korea.

In Seoul, relatives of the released hostages expressed joy, while the government sought to dispel fears that its symbolic concessions to the Taliban might have damaged its global diplomatic standing.

The crisis has put the government of President Roh Moo-hyun in a quandary. While it faced mounting domestic pressure to win the hostages' release, it also feared how the rest of the world would perceive its decision to talk directly with the Taliban.

"For us, the paramount task was to save the lives of the hostages," said Cheon Ho-seon, a spokesman for Roh, during a news briefing on Wednesday. "We believe it is any country's responsibility to respond with flexibility to save lives as long as you don't depart too far from the principles and practice of the international community."

South Korean church groups said Wednesday that they would abide by their government's pledge that they would stop working in Afghanistan.

Canadian soldier dies in Kabul compound; Shot in his room. Officials do not believe death was 'hostile action'

IDNUMBER 200708300037
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A15
KEYWORDS: WAR
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
BYLINE: ANDREW MAYEDA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 262

A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died yesterday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, military spokesperson Capt. Sylvain Chalifour said.

The soldier was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. local time, after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him, but he died around 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," Chalifour said.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour added.

The spokesperson declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul yesterday, and the room has been sealed off, he said. A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002. Most of the troops have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual,

Canadian soldier dies in Kabul compound; Shot in his room. Officials do not believe death was 'hostile action'

non-combat circumstances.

'No sign' of aid: CIDA spending questioned; 'Hospital lacks food, linen, drugs'. Think tank report 'distorted,' official says

IDNUMBER 200708300030

PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette

DATE: 2007.08.30

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A12

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: TOM BLACKWELL, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE / Anintensive-care unit at Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar showed little sign of the \$13-million projects intended to overhaul the facility. ;

KEYWORDS: !@DATELINE=OTTAWA

BYLINE: MIKE BLANCHFIELD

SOURCE: Can West News Service

WORD COUNT: 521

Only a half-hour drive from the state of the art health care offered at the main military base at Kandahar Air Field, the Mirwais Hospital – the main regional medical facility in southern Afghanistan – sat, earlier this month, in dilapidated ruin.

It is not at all certain "it deserves the name hospital," Norine MacDonald, the Canadian head of the Senlis Council think-thank, said yesterday.

A video presentation yesterday in Ottawa said little surgery beyond coping with war-related bombing tragedies takes place there. Major laboratory work is sent to the Kabul or out of country to Pakistan. Bed linen is rarely cleaned, there is no food service and when patients need drugs, the doctors often pay for them out of their own pockets.

More troubling perhaps for Canadian taxpayers – not to mention military families – is that the Senlis Council found no sign of two major projects, with price tags of more than \$13 million, that had been trumpeted by the Canadian International Development Agency when it visited Mirwais earlier this month.

"It really points to the need for a dramatic overhaul," MacDonald said yesterday. She proposed the hospital "might in some way be adopted by the Canadian medical community and that it could really be made a showcase of Canada's commitment to the people of Kandahar."

The state of Mirwais Hospital was a focal point of the London-based organization's criticism of the pace of CIDA's development efforts in southern Afghanistan, criticism dismissed by CIDA as distorted and inaccurate.

CIDA contributions to the hospital this year totaled \$3 million, through the International Committee of the Red Cross and another \$350,000 through the United Nations Children's Fund for maternity care, according to an Aug. 20 email by Michel de Salaberry, Foreign Affairs's new senior civilian co-ordinator to the Senlis Council that it released as part of its report.

In addition, new CIDA minister Bev Oda announced last week Canada was donating another \$10 million through UNICEF for maternal and infant health care, as part of \$45 million in funding to development projects.

MacDonald said that when she led a Senlis team to the hospital to look for evidence of the Canadian spending, hospital administrators told her none of the ICRC funds had shown up, and there was no evidence – beyond an empty tent – of any maternity program.

Canada has earmarked

\$1.2 billion in development spending to Afghanistan for 2001–2011. All of the money is filtered through international organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Committee of the Red Cross among others, and is spent all across Afghanistan, not just in the south where Canada's military efforts are focused.

A livid CIDA official said yesterday after the Senlis presentation "this hospital needs help," but he accused Senlis of distorting facts and rejecting explanations for how past Canadian money has been spent and who is responsible for delivering aid directly to the hospital.

The official said the \$350,000 spent so far has gone to train maternal health–care workers and that the \$10 million earmarked to UNICEF last week would go toward improving obstetric care, nursing, midwifery and improving care to sick children throughout the south.

Harper is well aware of the pitfalls in his Afghan policy

IDNUMBER	200708300041
PUBLICATION:	Vancouver Sun
DATE:	2007.08.30
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	Editorial
PAGE:	A15
COLUMN:	Barbara Yaffe
KEYWORDS:	PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT;CANADA
BYLINE:	Barbara Yaffe
SOURCE:	Vancouver Sun
WORD COUNT:	633

Canadians will witness a new communications strategy on Afghanistan this fall, because the one the Harper government has peddled to date has been a bust.

Canadians are less gung-ho about militarism than Americans, whose history is replete with battles that yielded new territory and colourful heroes.

In the U.S., people are war proud, and soldiers are treated to special airport lounges and endless discounts. There's a glorification factor utterly absent in this country.

My own theory: Canadians are no less proud of their fighting folk than Americans. But north of 49, two major home-based military experiences have been sources of guilt and controversy rather than achievement.

I'm speaking of the 1759 battle on the Plains of Abraham in which the English defeated the French and have been trying to make up for it ever since. And the widely condemned 1970 invocation of the War Measures Act, when, during the so-called FLQ crisis, Quebecers were rounded up and arrested without charge and soldiers trooped through the streets of Montreal.

Moreover, becoming a soldier has always been viewed in Canada less as an illustrious career opportunity than a source of last-resort employment in regions where jobs are scarce. A disproportionate number of soldiers come from Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

So, the faraway, deadly Afghan mission was never going to be an easy sell for Canadians. That goes double for Quebecers, now watching their own come home in body bags.

The Van Doo — the Royal 22nd Regiment from Valcartier — was dispatched to Kandahar in July; in a three-day period last week Simon Longtin, Christian Duschene and Mario Mercier were killed.

Since the 2002 start of the mission, six Quebecers — among 69 Canadians — have been killed. (A 70th, as yet unidentified soldier, was found dead in Kabul Wednesday.) Polls show one Quebecer in three supports remaining in Afghanistan beyond Canada's February 2009 NATO commitment, compared to one in two elsewhere in Canada.

Predictably, last week's round of casualties triggered renewed political debate.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper needs Quebec if he's to win a majority government. But he's on the wrong side of the Afghan issue while his two main opponents in Quebec, the Bloc Quebecois and Liberals, are more in tune with Quebec opinion.

Liberals want troops replaced by another NATO contingent in early 2009 while Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe is insisting on a firm end date to the mission. The NDP wants an immediate troop withdrawal.

Harper has good reason to move on this issue. First, three Quebec byelections, scheduled for Sept. 17, will provide a reading on Conservative popularity in Quebec and will give the party momentum, or not.

Second, Harper is likely to launch a new session of Parliament this fall to re-energize his government with a throne speech — which potentially could be followed by a non-confidence motion. Such a motion could topple the government if the three opposition parties join hands. (It's difficult to see why they would, given that polls show none stands to gain much from an early election.)

Any early confidence vote in Parliament would be an unpalatable prospect for Conservatives with dead soldiers being repatriated every week.

The Conference of Defence Associations, a lobby group on defence and security issues, lamented last week that what Canadians know best about the Afghan mission are casualty figures. The CDA, in a news release, notes a plan is afoot to have government officials deliver media briefings on Afghanistan starting Sept. 4. The organization wants the briefings to be held weekly.

Harper well understands the political pickle the Kandahar deployment represents.

That's why he shuffled his cabinet a few weeks ago to put two loquacious, photogenic ministers — Peter MacKay from the Atlantic region and Maxime Bernier from Quebec — front and centre, to sell the assignment.

He alerted George W. Bush to his plight at the Aug. 20 Montebello summit, getting a statement out of the president that the Canadians already have done "brilliant" work in Afghanistan.

The PM also has begun shifting his messaging, pledging troops won't stay beyond 2009 without opposition sanction and that more focus would be put on reconstruction.

Count on it. Harper is not prepared to lose an election over Afghanistan.

byaffe@png.canwest.com

Canadians back legal poppy farms; Nearly 8 in 10 support turning Afghan crops into sources of medicines

IDNUMBER 200708300015
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Desmond Boylan, Reuters / Afghan government officials and police watch a pile of seized drugs burning on the outskirts of Kabul this week. ;
KEYWORDS: DRUGS; FARMERS & FARMING; WORLD WAR I; VETERANS; BOTANY
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 319

OTTAWA — Britain's top diplomat in Canada has dismissed a poll, commissioned by the international think-tank that champions legalization of Afghanistan's contentious opium poppy crop, which shows that Canadians overwhelmingly support for the use of Afghan opium for medicinal purposes.

"It is a surprise that people reach for silver bullets," British High Commissioner Anthony Cary said in an interview Wednesday.

An Ipsos Reid survey of 1,000 Canadians, conducted on behalf of the Senlis Council, found that nearly eight in 10 Canadians (79 per cent) want Prime Minister Stephen Harper to get behind an international pilot project that would help transform Afghanistan's illicit opium cultivation into a legal source for codeine, morphine and other legitimate pain medications for the international market.

The poll release comes two days after the United Nations' latest audit of the poppy-farming trade found that Afghanistan's production of opium, the key ingredient in heroin, has reached record levels in the six years that western nations have controlled the country.

Britain is a key Canadian ally in southern Afghanistan. It is responsible for Helmand Province, where the UN report found that poppy cultivation has increased 48 per cent, making it a bigger opium producer than any other single country in the world.

In neighbouring Kandahar province, where Canada's 2,500 troops are stationed, poppy cultivation rose by 32 per cent, the UN study found.

Cary noted that while opium production has been licensed in such places as Thailand and Turkey, it took 15 years to achieve such a system. Afghanistan simply lacks the infrastructure and regulatory framework to cultivate opium legally and to keep it out of the hands of drug dealers, he said.

The European-funded Senlis Council is headed by Canadian lawyer Norine MacDonald. The survey, conducted Aug. 14-16, also found that 82 per cent of respondents opposed the U.S.-led policy of chemical

spraying to eradicate poppies. The survey has a margin of error of 3.1 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

Canadian dies of gunshot at Kabul NATO headquarters; The soldier, whose identity is being withheld, was found in his room

IDNUMBER 200708300014
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
KEYWORDS: WAR; FOREIGN RELATIONS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 365

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died Wednesday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier was found in his room at about 6:30 a.m. local time, suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him but he died at approximately 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," said Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour added.

The spokesman declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul on Wednesday, and the room has been sealed off, he said.

A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police.

They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

Canadian dies of gunshot at Kabul NATO headquarters; The soldier, whose identity is being withheld, was found

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar province as part of another operation that supports the NATO-led coalition.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Most of the troops have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual, non-combat circumstances.

Judging by past investigations into such incidents, it could be months before light is shed on Wednesday's death.

Last August, Master Cpl. Jeffrey Walsh, a native of Regina, was accidentally shot dead by a fellow Canadian soldier while they were on patrol in a G-wagon. Walsh's family claimed the military kept them in the dark for eight months.

The soldier who shot Walsh, Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser, was charged with manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in March.

This spring, Cpl. Kevin Megeney was accidentally shot in the chest while in his tent at Kandahar Airfield. The Canadian Forces National Investigation Service is still looking into the incident.

The service is usually called in when military police suspect there has been a serious breach of the military's code of conduct or that a criminal offence has been committed.

Starving kids, little aid in Kandahar, group says

IDNUMBER 200708300013
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 132

An international think-tank says it found starving children but little evidence of how Canadian aid is helping people in Kandahar's main hospital or a sprawling refugee camp.

The Senlis Council says Ottawa should drastically overhaul how it directs and tracks aid to the volatile southern region of Afghanistan.

Development Minister Bev Oda swiftly played down the Senlis findings as simplistic and without context. Ottawa is sending more than \$1 billion over 10 years in aid to experienced partners on the ground who are accountable for it, she said.

Senlis, backed by 12 European foundations, is best known for its opposition to U.S.-led destruction of the burgeoning Afghan poppy crops. Instead, Senlis supports poppy-for-medicine projects that would see village-cultivated poppy turned into morphine tablets. The group denies being backed by the pharmaceutical industry.

Canadian soldier dies in NATO compound

IDNUMBER 200708300007
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 157

A member of the Canadian Forces has died from a gunshot wound inflicted inside a secure compound in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

The soldier, serving at the headquarters of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, died shortly after 7:30 a.m. local time yesterday.

The victim had been found seriously injured in his room an hour earlier and doctors were unable to save him.

His name is being temporarily withheld at the family's request. The military has not released his age, hometown, rank, base or regiment.

Officials have ruled out enemy action, saying the shooting occurred within the NATO compound in Kabul.

Investigators are looking at the possibility of suicide but aren't ruling out homicide or a firearms accident.

Seventy Canadian soldiers have now died in Afghanistan since 2002.

The toll includes an accidental shooting that claimed the life of a soldier in March this year at the NATO base at Kandahar Airfield. Another accidental discharge of a weapon killed a Canadian in August last year while troops were on patrol. In 2004, a soldier apparently shot and injured himself but the military has not officially said whether it was a suicide attempt.

Hostages free, Ottawa angry; Top of the World

IDNUMBER 200708300005
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Musadeq Sadeq, the Associated Press / Hostages;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 173

While the families of 12 people held for six weeks by the Taliban celebrated their release yesterday, Canada expressed regret over South Korea's decision to negotiate with the militants for the captives' freedom.

With 2,300 Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, as well as development officials, diplomats, and nongovernment workers, Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier's office expressed disapproval of South Korea's handling of the crisis.

"We do not negotiate with terrorists, for any reason," said a statement from Bernier's office. "Such negotiations, even if unsuccessful, only lead to further acts of terrorism."

The Taliban released 12 of 19 South Korean missionary aid workers yesterday -- that's one above -- with the rest to be freed over the next 48 hours.

Under the deal, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its 200 noncombatant troops from Afghanistan by year's end. Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the Muslim country.

Because the Afghan government was not party to the talks, critics say the Taliban could gain enhanced political legitimacy for negotiating successfully with a foreign government.

South Korea's capitulation

IDNUMBER 200708300044
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: The Editorial Page
PAGE: A16
KEYWORDS: ARMAMENTS; ASYLUM; NUCLEAR WEAPONS; FAMILY REUNIONS;
NUCLEARREACTORS
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 314

Napoleon Bonaparte once remarked that it had always been his good fortune to fight against alliances.

How right he was. First it was the Spanish, now it is the South Koreans: Once more, part of the alliance resisting Islamist terrorism has been intimidated into exiting the war on terror .

The withdrawal of South Korean troops from Afghanistan as part of a deal to secure the release of 19 of their fellow countrymen — Christian missionaries kidnapped by the Taliban — will not alter the order of battle much, of course.

The purpose of South Korea's deployment of 200 troops to Afghanistan in non-combat roles (medical and engineering) was always largely a symbolic display of support for the UN mission to back up the Afghan government in Kabul, and begin rebuilding the war-weary country.

They were going home in December, anyway, and the agreement has apparently not advanced their departure.

Triumphant symbolism, however, is precisely the nature of the coup scored by the Taliban.

First, it took the hostages — the largest group ever captured — on a road paved by the alliance, in an area considered to require only medium security. By killing two of them and threatening to kill 19 more, it detached one country from the alliance. Then, its spokesmen entered the city of Ghazni under a white flag of truce, met with Korean national representatives, and spoke to reporters.

Finally, in perhaps the most telling symbol of all, it secured a pledge from Seoul to prevent its Christian missionaries from working in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan is far from over. But, with front page pictures of its officials displayed on television and the front pages of the world's newspapers, the Taliban can now portray itself to its domestic audience as credible, powerful — and, likely to outlast both the alliance and the Kabul government it supports.

Ordinary Afghans are reportedly outraged by the agreement.

It's not hard to see why.

If the world abandons them country by country, they will have to live with the consequences — and those who have worked hardest for reconstruction may well not even be given that option.

British diplomat opposes legalized Afghan poppy crop

IDNUMBER 200708300036
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
KEYWORDS: DRUGS; FARMERS & FARMING; VETERANS; WORLD WAR I; BOTANY
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 212

Britain's top diplomat in Canada has dismissed a poll commissioned by an international think-tank that is championing the legalization of Afghanistan's contentious opium poppy crop, which shows Canadians overwhelmingly support the use of Afghan opium for medicinal purposes.

"It is a surprise that people reach for silver bullets," British High Commissioner Anthony Cary said Wednesday.

Cary was responding to the release of an Ipsos-Reid survey of 1,000 Canadians conducted on behalf of the Senlis Council.

The survey found that 79 per cent of Canadians want Prime Minister Stephen Harper to get behind an international pilot project that would help transform Afghanistan's illicit opium cultivation into a legal source for codeine, morphine and other legitimate pain medications for the international market.

The poll's release comes two days after the United Nations' latest audit of the poppy farming trade found Afghanistan's production of opium, the key ingredient in heroin, has reached record levels in the six years that western nations have controlled the country.

Britain is a key Canadian ally in southern Afghanistan. It is responsible for Helmand Province, where poppy cultivation has increased 48 per cent, making it a bigger opium producer than any country in the world. Cary said while opium production has been licensed in such places as Thailand and Turkey, it took 15 years to achieve such a system.

Send choppers now: senator

IDNUMBER 200708300034
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
KEYWORDS: HELICOPTERS; ARMED FORCES; AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS;
AFGHANISTAN;CANADA
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 272

The head of the Senate's defence committee is calling on the government and the military to immediately send Griffon helicopters to Afghanistan as part of an effort to cut down on casualties.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny says the use of the choppers as resupply transports would reduce the time troops spend operating ground-supply convoys that are highly vulnerable to insurgent attacks and IEDs -- improvised explosive devices.

IEDs are seen as the main threat to soldiers on the ground at this point, he added. Military officers see more use of helicopters to move supplies and personnel as one of the solutions in reducing that exposure to IEDs.

Canada is currently in negotiations to purchase medium-lift Chinook choppers from the U.S., but those aircraft might not be available until 2011.

But Kenny says Canada has an existing fleet of smaller Griffon choppers that could be used in Afghanistan. "Obviously the Griffons won't be able to carry as much as a Chinook, but they can still play a role in moving some equipment and reducing some of the exposure of supply columns to IEDs," he said. "Any amount counts.

"Why isn't that being done?" Kenny asked. "Why do we have 76 Griffons still sitting here in Canada?"

Defence department spokeswoman Sarah Kavanagh said the current Afghanistan mission requires a medium-lift helicopter able to carry sufficient numbers of personnel, up to 30 at a time, or an appropriate amount of cargo and equipment.

"The role of the Griffon is not intended to fill the role of a medium-lift helicopter and at this time there is no intent to deploy the Griffon to Afghanistan," said Kavanagh, adding the Griffon is not suited to the country's environment but Canadian Forces would continue to monitor the situation.

Development efforts in Afghanistan criticized; Canadian cash comes under fire from think-tank

IDNUMBER 200708300033
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A13
KEYWORDS: !@DATELINE=OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Can West News Service
WORD COUNT: 438

Only a half-hour drive from the state-of-the-art health care offered at the main military base at Kandahar Air Field, the Mirwais Hospital — the main regional medical facility in southern Afghanistan — sat, earlier this month, in dilapidated ruin.

It is not at all certain "it deserves the name hospital," Norine MacDonald, the Canadian head of the Senlis Council think-tank, said Wednesday.

A video presentation Wednesday in Ottawa said little surgery beyond coping with war-related bombing tragedies takes place there. Major laboratory work is sent to Kabul or out-of-country to Pakistan, the bed linens are rarely cleaned, there is no food service and, when patients need drugs, the doctors often pay for them out of their own pockets.

More troubling perhaps for Canadian taxpayers — not to mention military families — the Senlis Council found no sign of two major projects, worth more than \$13 million, that had been trumpeted by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) when it visited Mirwais this month.

"It really points to the need for a dramatic overhaul," MacDonald said Wednesday, as she proposed the run-down hospital "might in some way be adopted by the Canadian medical community and that it could really be made a showcase of Canada's commitment to the people of Kandahar."

The state of Mirwais Hospital was a focal point of the London-based organization's criticism of the pace of CIDA's development efforts in southern Afghanistan, criticism dismissed by CIDA as distorted and inaccurate.

CIDA contributions to the hospital this year totalled \$3 million, through the International Committee of the Red Cross, and another \$350,000 was supplied through the United Nations Children's Fund for maternity care, according to Michel de Salaberry, Foreign Affairs' new senior civilian co-ordinator to the Senlis Council.

In addition, new CIDA minister Bev Oda announced last week Canada was donating another \$10 million through UNICEF for maternal and infant health care.

MacDonald said when she led a Senlis team to the hospital on Aug. 2 to look for evidence of the Canadian spending, hospital administrators told her none of the Red Cross funds had shown up, and there was no evidence — beyond an empty tent on hospital grounds — of any maternity program.

A livid CIDA official said Wednesday after the Senlis presentation that "this hospital needs help," but he accused Senlis of distorting facts, and rejecting explanations for how past Canadian money has been spent and who is responsible for delivering aid directly to the hospital.

The official said the \$350,000 spent so far has gone to train maternal health-care workers and that the \$10 million earmarked to UNICEF last week would go towards improving obstetric care, nursing, midwifery and improving care to sick children throughout the south.

Canadian soldier found shot dead in his room; Hostile action not likely cause, says military

IDNUMBER 200708300018
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
KEYWORDS: WAR
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 337

A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died Wednesday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. local time, after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him but he died around 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," said Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon. It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour added.

The spokesman declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul on Wednesday, and the room has been sealed off, he said. A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar province as part of another operation that supports the NATO-led coalition.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002. Most of the troops have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual, non-combat circumstances.

Judging by past investigations into such incidents, it could be months before light is shed on Wednesday's death. Last August, Master Cpl. Jeffrey Walsh, a native of Regina, was accidentally shot by a fellow Canadian soldier while they were on patrol in a G-wagon vehicle.

HOSTAGE RELEASE: ALL AID WORKERS TO BE FREED IN NEXT 48 HOURS Taliban hand over 12 of 19 South Korean captives

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL
IDN: 072420225
DATE: 2007.08.30
PAGE: A16 (ILLUS)
BYLINE: AMIR SHAH
SECTION: International News
SOURCE: AP
EDITION: Metro
DATELINE: QALA-E-KAZI, AFGHANISTAN
WORDS: 530
WORD COUNT: 508

AMIR SHAH Associated Press QALA-E-KAZI, AFGHANISTAN Taliban militants released 12 captives in a series of handovers yesterday, part of a deal with Seoul to free all 19 South Korean hostages that one Afghan minister warned would embolden the insurgents.

The South Koreans, Christian aid workers who were kidnapped nearly six weeks ago, were turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross at three locations in central Afghanistan. None of the 12 spoke to reporters.

The remaining South Koreans will be freed over the next 48 hours, Taliban commanders have said.

The first three women freed came to Qala-e-Kazi in a single car, their heads covered with red and green shawls. Red Cross officials quickly took them to their vehicles.

Under the deal reached Tuesday, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by year's end. Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the staunchly Muslim country.

The Taliban apparently backed down on demands for a prisoner exchange.

But the militant group could emerge with enhanced political legitimacy for negotiating successfully with a foreign government.

"One has to say that this release under these conditions will make our difficulties in Afghanistan even bigger," Commerce Minister Amin Farhang told Germany's Bayerischer Rundfunk radio. "We fear that this decision could become a precedent. The Taliban will continue trying to take hostages to attain their aims." South Korea's government, which has been under intense domestic pressure to bring the hostages home, said it tried to adhere to international principles while putting a priority on saving the captives.

The deal was made in face-to-face talks between Taliban negotiators and South Korean diplomats in Ghazni. The Afghan government was not party to the negotiations, which were facilitated by the Red Cross.

The Seoul government and relatives of the hostages have stressed that the kidnapped South Koreans were not missionaries, but were doing aid work such as helping in hospitals.

The Taliban have not said why the hostages were not released all at once. One factor behind the staggered release is believed to be logistics — the captives may have been held in different places far from each other in the mountainous area.

Security may be another reason. Freeing the hostages gradually allows time for most of the captors to escape while the group still holds some captives in case of operations by Afghan forces.

The Taliban and South Korea have said money played no part in Tuesday's deal.

Relatives of the freed captives expressed relief the ordeal was over.

"I talked to my parents on the phone and they cried and said '[our daughter] is coming back alive,' " Lee Jung-hoon, the brother of one woman who was freed yesterday, said from South Korea. "On the other side of my mind . . . I strongly hope that the remaining hostages will safely come back soon as well." The Taliban kidnapped the 23 South Koreans as they travelled by bus from Kabul to Kandahar on July 19. In late July, the militants killed two male hostages, and they released two women earlier this month as a gesture of good will.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; hostages; kidnapping; south koreans

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

THE AFGHAN MISSION: CIRCUMSTANCES UNCLEAR REGARDING FATALLY WOUNDED CANADIAN Soldier's death leaves only dreadful possibilities

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072420224

DATE: 2007.08.30

PAGE: A16

BYLINE: CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD

SECTION: Column

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORDS: 752

WORD COUNT: 679

CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN In Afghanistan, there is almost no end to the terrible variety of ways that death may come.

The latest reminder of this hard truth came yesterday from an unlikely place – one of the safest compounds in Kabul, the country's capital, about 380 kilometres removed from regular violence of the southern provinces – and in an as-yet-undetermined but almost certainly tragic manner.

An unidentified Canadian soldier was discovered early yesterday morning, dying of a gunshot wound, in his room at the International Security Assistance Force to Afghanistan, or ISAF, headquarters.

Despite efforts of medics to save him, he was pronounced dead about an hour later, at 7:30 a.m. Kabul time, or about 11 p.m. Tuesday night in central Canada.

He was the 70th Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan since 2002, shortly after the fall of the Taliban.

ISAF said in a formal statement that enemy action has been ruled out, this because the soldier died within the secure perimeter of the compound. That leaves as options for the cause of the man's death only dreadful possibilities – an accidental, or as it's called in the military a negligent discharge, foul play, or a self-inflicted wound.

About 10 hours later, the small group of about 55 Canadian soldiers who work at ISAF headquarters gathered in a private memorial service on the "Canadian lines" within the compound for their fallen comrade.

They were described as upset and troubled.

As always with the military – whether death arrives in combat, by improvised explosive device or suicide bomber, through traffic accident, friendly fire or as now when the circumstances are unclear – the service is both brief and swift.

It is uncertain whether a more formal ramp service would be held for any soldier who died in Kabul as a simple matter of logistics.

Soldiers travel about the city only by heavily armoured sport utility-type vehicles, usually in small convoys of three or four vehicles, and simply getting even the small Canadian contingent to and from the airport about 15 minutes away from the centre of the city would be impractical.

The soldier's name has not been released yet at the request of his family, but The Globe and Mail has learned he was, like most of his fellow citizens, a staff officer at the ISAF headquarters.

There are more than 1,700 soldiers from many of the approximately three dozen nations contributing to the Afghanistan mission who work and live cheek by jowl at the small ISAF compound. It is these men and women who do the behind-the-scenes work that keeps the wheels of the enormous mission, now run by NATO, turning.

Most of the Canadians at the headquarters are general staff officers but also included in their number are junior and senior non-commissioned officers, or NCOs, in clerical or administrative positions. They share so-called "hard quarters," meaning a proper building as opposed to a tent, and are usually bunked two to a room.

It isn't known who first discovered the fatally wounded officer, or how.

Another group of 15 Canadian soldiers with the National Support Element, the logistical arm of the military, are posted at a British base near Kabul; they maintain the others in the capital.

A third 15-member group called the Strategic Advisory Team, or SAT, works closely with the fledgling Afghan civil service and in various departments of President Hamid Karzai's government. It was first developed when General Rick Hillier, now the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, was stationed in Kabul as the ISAF commander in 2003-04.

Though the Canadian footprint in Afghanistan is felt mostly in Kandahar province, where the bulk of Canada's 2,500 troops are deployed in the most dangerous part of the country, the small SAT team in particular is intimately involved in the President's office and in helping Afghans implement the strategic plan for the country.

It is arguably the most influential group of Canadians in the country.

The officer's death is being probed by the military's National Investigation Service, which probes any serious criminal or sensitive incident involving loss of life.

The NIS has still not released the results of its investigation into the March 5 death of Corporal Kevin Megeney, who died of a gunshot wound to the chest in Kandahar. Enemy action in the death of the 25-year-old reservist from New Glasgow, N.S., has also been ruled out.

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ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Kabul; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: strife; war; deaths

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

BRIDGES OVER THE ABYSS Afghan reality: talking to the enemy The solution's not on the ground in southern Afghanistan – it's in Kabul

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072420173

DATE: 2007.08.30

PAGE: A21 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: JANICE GROSS STEIN

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 827

WORD COUNT: 875

JANICE GROSS STEIN Director of the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto
Two days ago, spokesmen for the Taliban announced an agreement to release 19 kidnapped South Korean church volunteers. Some observers immediately claimed that the Taliban had new legitimacy as a negotiating partner. "They successfully negotiated a deal with a foreign government," Barnett Rubin, an expert on Afghanistan, told The Globe and Mail.

"This takes the Taliban to a different level of recognition." There is a very large leap, however, from a hostage deal to negotiations about the future governance of the country. Nevertheless, the deal does suggest there may be some bridges over the abyss.

Even amidst ferocious fighting, adversaries who do not recognize each other come together, often through a third party, to negotiate the release of hostages or an exchange of prisoners. In the long history of the bitter Arab–Israeli conflict, there have often been these kinds of negotiations. In other conflicts, warring parties have worked out temporary ceasefires to remove wounded from the battlefield, or to celebrate holidays with "Christmas truces." But making deals over hostages and prisoners do not necessarily signal an intention to negotiate. Adversaries often go right back to war as soon as the truce is over.

Nevertheless, the negotiations with the Taliban do tell Afghan President Hamid Karzai something. There is a political structure to the Taliban, local or central, that can make decisions and deliver results.

The Taliban of today are not the same Taliban who swept to power in Afghanistan more than a decade ago. There is ongoing debate on "who" the Taliban are – indeed, on whether there is a unified movement, with a structure at the top that controls local decision-making and reaches down to the ground in Afghanistan. Today, Taliban leaders walk openly in the streets of Quetta in western Pakistan. The Taliban shura (council) meets regularly, and a spokesman holds press conferences.

The structure of the Taliban inside Afghanistan is much less clear.

Local Taliban leaders in the south and east make operational decisions with little or no consultation with leaders in Quetta. And they do not speak with a single voice. Some local leaders have negotiated truces with elders and pulled out of villages, at least until the truce was broken. Others continue to launch direct assaults against North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces, plant roadside bombs, and attack schools and clinics rebuilt since 2001. The Taliban are far more fragmented today than they were six years ago.

Taliban leaders, of course, are the only element in the insurgency.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who fought fiercely against Soviet forces and then in the civil war that erupted after the Soviet Union withdrew, has openly declared his support for the Taliban. More important, hundreds of young Afghan men, especially in the south, have joined the insurgency because they have no jobs, no money and very little hope. The Taliban pay much better than does Mr. Karzai's government.

Finally, in the narco-economy that increasingly dominates the southern provinces, drug lords work closely with the Taliban, who protect their supply routes.

In this complex context, who exactly does Mr. Karzai negotiate with? Who is the authoritative representative of the Taliban in Afghanistan? That argument is frequently made by those opposed to negotiating with the Taliban. The talks that led to the release of the Korean hostages tell a somewhat encouraging story. The Taliban – whether at a local level or one higher up the chain of command – were able to delegate authority to a team of negotiators, with Afghan elders playing a crucial intermediary role. What's encouraging is not that the Taliban negotiated over the hostages but that they were capable of delivering a result.

Mr. Karzai, in fact, has already begun a series of negotiations with the Taliban through different channels. These negotiations are not with Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban's elusive leader, but with men much lower down the chain. Mr. Karzai is exploring the possibility that "soft" Taliban leaders may leave the insurgency and join the government. Informal processes – ones with plausible deniability – are under way.

The Inter-Services Intelligence, the largest and most powerful intelligence agency in Pakistan and a long-time supporter of the Taliban, has also mediated discussions. The question is no longer whether to negotiate with the Taliban. Informal negotiations to separate the "softer" Taliban from the hard core around Mullah Omar are ongoing. The only question is: How high up the chain of command should Mr. Karzai go? Insurgencies do end, although they usually have a long life cycle.

A very few end with the unmistakable defeat of the insurgents or the government. But most end through negotiation, when insurgents lose hope they can win and governments open up political space, talk to their adversaries, and bring them into some kind of political coalition. The insurgency is raging in the south of Afghanistan, but the solution is in Kabul.

Janice Gross Stein is co-author, with Eugene Lang, of the forthcoming *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar*.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; political; government; kidnapping; hostages; south koreans

PERSONAL NAME: Hamid Karzai

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

MILITARY PROCUREMENT Providing drones, in time

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072420159

DATE: 2007.08.30

PAGE: A20

BYLINE:

SECTION: Editorial

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 474

WORD COUNT: 523

Rare is the occasion on which the federal government – or any government, for that matter – should be criticized for moving too cautiously on procurement. This applies in particular to the Department of National Defence, which has developed an unfortunate habit of awarding contracts without first opening them up to competition. While the Conservatives have laudably committed themselves to accelerating upgrades to military equipment after years of neglect under their predecessors, they have been too willing to award sole-source, multi-billion-dollar contracts for the likes of transport planes rather than tendering them.

But Canada is at war, and when the lives of Canadian soldiers are at stake expediency should take priority. Falling squarely into this category is a much-needed upgrade to our military's stock of aerial drones, the unmanned surveillance devices needed to identify threats in Afghanistan. According to troops on the ground, our current drones' limitations – notably that they cannot fly for more than a few hours at a time and cannot perform in extremely hot temperatures, an obvious problem in a war being fought in the Afghan desert – have led to gaps in surveillance. It has been suggested that lives may have been lost because of the drones' failure to detect the planting of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

There are two obvious solutions: upgrade the drones we have or purchase better ones. But of all the possible investments, this is the one on which the federal government appears to have decided to go to the wall to ensure the process is conducted fairly.

Last April, it was reported that the Conservatives had rejected a plan by the Defence Department to buy Predator unmanned aircrafts – to be used both in Afghanistan and for surveillance of Canadian coasts – from the U.S. firm General Atomics. Having just been chastised by the Auditor-General for untendered military contracts, the government was apparently concerned by the optics of spending more than \$500-million without opening it up to competition – especially since a British Columbia company also looking to sell drones would have been overlooked.

Since then, little progress appears to have been made on choosing a supplier, with reports suggesting the government is now targeting 2009 for new drones. Meanwhile, the Quebec-based firm Rheinmetall Canada says that it has been standing by for months with low-cost upgrades to the current fleet that would improve the existing drones' endurance, but that it has yet to receive the green light from Defence.

The government cannot afford to throw money blindly without weighing its options. But surely there is room for compromise here. Instead of taking years to go through a formal process, Ottawa should quickly determine the fastest and most efficient way of getting better surveillance aircraft. The newfound commitment to an open process can be applied to other, less pressing purchases.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: defence; contracts; aircraft; strife; electronic surveillance; government; political

AFGHAN MISSION: CIDA UNDER FIRE Millions in aid gone astray, group says Funding hasn't translated into substantial help for suffering Afghan population, think tank concludes

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072420044

DATE: 2007.08.30

PAGE: A7

BYLINE: GLORIA GALLOWAY

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 701

WORD COUNT: 647

GLORIA GALLOWAY OTTAWA The Canadian government has done little to relieve the suffering of the Afghan people, says a policy group that cites the disappearance of millions of aid dollars, an absence of oversight, and thousands of refugees who have been left to starve.

The Canadian International Development Agency says Canada has committed to spending \$1.2-billion between 2001 and 2011 to foster the reconstruction of Afghanistan. By its own accounting, it transferred \$39-million last year to the volatile Kandahar district, where Canadian troops are stationed, and another \$100-million to the country at large.

But the Senlis Council, an international think tank that examines security and development issues, has been working in the country for two years and says it is hard-pressed to find positive results from that expenditure.

"We were not able to see any substantial impact of CIDA's work in Kandahar and, as a matter of fact, we saw many instances of the extreme suffering of the Afghan people," Norine MacDonald, the council's president and lead field researcher, told a press conference yesterday morning.

When the Senlis Council originally complained that Canadian aid was ineffective, CIDA officials offered a list of Afghan projects that the agency had funded and asked that researchers be dispatched to check them out, Ms. MacDonald said.

What they found this month were an overcrowded and filthy hospital in Kandahar city that could provide few services to patients; refugee camps that had gone without food aid for 1 1/2 years; a construction project that employed child labour, and a displaced population struggling to survive.

The development agency said earlier this year that it had given \$350,000 to UNICEF to establish a maternal waiting home at the hospital, plus a grant of \$5-million to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had specifically appealed for money for the medical facility. A later e-mail announcement reduced the \$5-million figure to \$3-million.

But "we could not find evidence of CIDA's work, or CIDA-funded work that matched the information given to us by CIDA" at the hospital, Ms. MacDonald said.

AFGHAN MISSION: CIDA UNDER FIRE Millions in aid gone astray, group says Funding hasn't translated in

The maternity project was supposed to have been operating in a temporary tent on hospital grounds. But the tent was empty on the day the Senlis researchers arrived. And the next day it was gone.

CIDA officials say UNICEF had set up a temporary maternity project that is no longer running but will be re-established on a permanent basis with much more funding. Ms. MacDonald said she was told that it had simply never existed.

Inside the hospital, the ward for malnourished babies had 14 beds for 26 children. There was a lack of basic medical equipment, housekeeping and ventilation. One doctor interviewed on film said he and his colleagues were paying for medications out of their own pockets and did not have the ability to perform even routine blood tests.

Bev Oda, who recently took over as minister for CIDA, said Canadians will always wish that things could be better for the Afghan people.

"As far as the accountability of the dollars, I am quite confident that the dollars we're committing to support Afghanistan is beneficial.

We have real results that we can show," Ms. Oda said.

Canada is not directly responsible for the hospital, she said, and all of the countries working in Afghanistan are giving money to the ICRC to help run it.

The council's report says part of the problem is that there are too few CIDA employees on the ground and their movement is restricted so they can't see for themselves how the Canadian aid dollars are being spent.

The development agency responds there are three Canadian CIDA workers in Afghanistan, plus eight local workers, and they say they have made several trips to the hospital.

Ms. Oda said the number of CIDA people in the country will be increased this fall to eight and it is important to note that much of the oversight work is done by locals. It is "our intent . . .

to build the country and the population up so that they are going to be able to sustain the quality of life that we all expect."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: government finance; foreign aid; reconstruction; political

ORGANIZATION NAME: Canadian International Development Agency; Senlis Council

Soldier found dead in Kabul

IDNUMBER 200708300100
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: C10
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 116

A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died Wednesday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier had suffered a gunshot wound. The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," said Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour added.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters.

Sacrificing long-term Afghan success for short-term votes

IDNUMBER 200708300058
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: National
SECTION: Editorials
PAGE: A14
BYLINE: Colonel (ret'd) Alain Pellerin
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 252

Re: Is Duceppe The Voice Of Quebec?, Andrew Coyne, Aug. 29.

The issue of whether Canada has "done its share" for the NATO mission in Afghanistan is a convenient smokescreen for opposition members looking to gain points. Such a debate is irrelevant if Canada and its allies are to succeed in Afghanistan.

Withdrawing unilaterally without a suitable replacement from the Afghan mission in Kandahar would mean that Canada is abandoning its allies, particularly the other (at least) eight nations who are also doing some heavy lifting in southern Afghanistan. It would also mean that Canada is abandoning the Afghan people, especially those in Kandahar who rely on Canada for security and development. As it is unlikely that other NATO members would be willing to immediately fill the gap, a premature withdrawal would sacrifice the significant achievements of the Canadian mission on the altar of short-term political gain.

For those who fear that Canadian troops are mired in a worsening morass of armed hostilities, it should be noted that there is a recalibration of the mission, from a stress on combat operations to one on mentoring and providing training particularly to the Afghan Army, for an eventual Afghan takeover of the mission's tasks. This is the only viable strategy for long-term success, and in that light we support a continuation of the mission beyond February, 2009, when the current parliamentary mandate expires.

Colonel (ret'd) Alain Pellerin, executive director, Conference of Defence Associations, Ottawa.

KEYWORDS: 0

Taliban releases 12 Korean hostages; 'I Strongly Deny This. It's Not True That Money Was Involved,' Terrorist Commander Says; Rest Likely To Be Freed Today

IDNUMBER 200708300047

PUBLICATION: National Post

DATE: 2007.08.30

EDITION: National

SECTION: World

PAGE: A12

ILLUSTRATION: Color Photo: SHAH MARAI, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, GETTY IMAGES/ Some of the South Korean aid workers kidnapped by the Taliban are released in Ghazni, about 140 kilometres south of Kabul, yesterday. ;

DATELINE: GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN

BYLINE: Mohammad Yaqob

SOURCE: Agence France-Presse

WORD COUNT: 310

GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN – The Taliban freed 12 of their 19 South Korean captives yesterday as the six-week hostage crisis in Afghanistan neared resolution.

The Islamic extremist movement handed over 10 women and two men to tribal elders in three separate releases several hours apart outside the central town of Ghazni. The aid workers were then driven to safety in Red Cross vehicles.

Greg Muller, a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, confirmed that 12 hostages had been released and taken to the Red Crescent Society offices in Ghazni, 140 kilometres south of Kabul.

"They seem, after six weeks in detention, very much relieved, which is a natural reaction after an extremely stressful experience," Mr. Muller said. "But physically they seem in good shape."

Many of the freed women were wearing headscarves and some appeared to be in tears. A bearded male hostage grinned broadly.

The freed hostages were among 23 Christian aid workers kidnapped by the Taliban on July 19. Two male captives were executed by their captors and two female hostages were freed this month.

Yesterday's releases came a day after the Taliban announced it would free all the hostages in the wake of South Korea's pledge to withdraw its military force from Afghanistan and ban missionary groups from the country.

The agreement came in face-to-face talks between Taliban negotiators and South Korean diplomats in Ghazni. The Taliban said the remaining hostages will likely be freed today.

The United States welcomed the release, but withheld comment on whether the agreement for their freedom set an unwelcome precedent.

Taliban releases 12 Korean hostages; 'I Strongly Deny This. It's Not True That Money Was Involved,' Terror

Amid speculation over whether a ransom was paid, both the Taliban and the South Korean government denied there was any secret deal.

"I strongly deny this. It's not true that money was involved," Taliban commander Qari Mohammad Bashir said.

The South Korean government promised to pull out its 200 troops in medical and engineering units from Afghanistan by the end of the year — something it was already planning to do.

It also promised to stop missionary activities by its Christian groups in Islamic Afghanistan — again, the government has already imposed a ban on all unauthorized travel to Afghanistan.

KEYWORDS: HOSTAGES; WAR; FOREIGN AID; TERRORISM

SOLDIER FOUND SHOT IN HIS ROOM; Family Requests Privacy; Military To Probe Death At NATO Headquarters

IDNUMBER 200708300028
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.08.30
EDITION: National
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 448

KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN – A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died yesterday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Captain Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. local time, after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him but he died at 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature [of the death] nor the events surrounding it," said Capt. Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Capt. Chalifour added.

The spokesman declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul yesterday, and the room has been sealed off, he said. A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom.

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar province as part of another operation that supports the NATO-led coalition.

SOLDIER FOUND SHOT IN HIS ROOM; Family Requests Privacy; Military To Probe Death At NATO Head

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002. Most of the troops have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual, non-combat circumstances.

Judging by past investigations into such incidents, it could be months before light is shed on yesterday's death.

Last August, Master Cpl. Jeffrey Walsh, a native of Regina, was accidentally shot by a fellow Canadian soldier while they were on patrol in a G-wagon vehicle. His family claimed the military kept them in the dark for eight months. The soldier who shot Master Cpl. Walsh, Master Cpl. Robbie Fraser, was charged with manslaughter and negligent performance of duty in March.

This spring, Cpl. Kevin Megeney was accidentally shot in the chest while in his tent at Kandahar Airfield. The Canadian Forces National Investigation Service is still looking into the incident. The service is usually called in when military police suspect there has been a serious breach of the military's code of conduct or that a criminal offence has been committed.

Canada's military commitment in Afghanistan ends in February, 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said he will seek the consensus of Parliament before extending the mission.

KEYWORDS: CANADIANS; WAR; COURT MARTIAL

No comment from feds on hostage release

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.30

PAGE: A7

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 215

CP Wire OTTAWA -- The Canadian government refused to say Wednesday whether it supports South Korea's decision to negotiate a hostage release with the Taliban.

Taliban militants released 12 captives in a series of handovers Wednesday, part of a deal with Seoul to free all 19 South Korean hostages that one Afghan minister warned would embolden the insurgents.

The South Koreans, Christian aid workers who were kidnapped nearly six weeks ago, were turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross at three locations in central Afghanistan. None of the 12 spoke to reporters.

Troop withdrawal The remaining South Koreans will be freed over the next 48 hours, Taliban commanders have said.

The first three women freed came to Qala-E-Kazi in a single car, their heads covered with red and green shawls. Red Cross officials quickly took them to their vehicles and set out for the office of the Afghan Red Crescent in the town of Ghazni, witnesses said.

Under the deal reached Tuesday, South Korea reaffirmed a pledge it made before the hostage crisis began to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by year's end. Seoul also said it would prevent South Korean Christian missionaries from working in the staunchly Muslim country.

-- Canadian Press {Ottawa ONT}

Probe launched into soldier's gun death z Canadian found shot, dying in his room z Suicide, murder or accident not ruled out

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.30

PAGE: A1

SECTION: World Wire

WORD COUNT: 418

CNS Andrew Mayeda KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A Canadian soldier serving at the NATO coalition headquarters in Kabul died Wednesday morning after being found shot in his room.

The soldier was not immediately identified, at the request of his family, said military spokesman Capt. Sylvain Chalifour.

The soldier was found in his room around 6:30 a.m. local time, after suffering a gunshot wound. Medical personnel tried to save him but he died around 7:30 a.m.

The cause of the death is being investigated by the Canadian military as well as the International Security Assistance Force, the name of the NATO force based in Afghanistan.

"Due to this police investigation, we won't comment on the nature (of the death) nor the events surrounding it," said Chalifour.

However, he said "all options are open" to consideration in relation to the cause of death, including suicide, murder and the accidental discharge of the weapon.

It does not appear that the death was caused by "hostile action," Chalifour added.

The spokesman declined to provide any more information on the soldier, including his age, rank and position, because of the investigation and the family's request for privacy.

Canadian investigators were on their way to Kabul on Wednesday, and the room has been sealed off, he said. A decision on a ramp ceremony was to be made in Kabul, but there was "nothing anticipated" at this point.

A handful of Canadian soldiers, most of them officers, are attached to NATO headquarters in Kabul, where they focus on building the Afghan National Army and reforming the Afghan National Police. They are part of Operation Archer, the Canadian contribution to the U.S.

Operation Enduring Freedom.

The bulk of Canada's roughly 2,300 soldiers in the country are stationed in Kandahar province as part of another NATO-led operation.

Seventy Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have now died in Afghanistan since 2002. Most of the troops have been killed by improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers, but some have died in unusual, non-combat circumstances.

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— CanWest News Service

Editorial – A dangerous deal

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.30

PAGE: A10

SECTION: Editorial Leaders

WORD COUNT: 380

None Taliban terrorists in Afghanistan have reached an agreement with the government of South Korea to release 19 hostages — Christian church volunteers doing aid work — that they have been holding for more than a month. The hostages were to be set free in stages this week and everyone should welcome their safe release — two had already been murdered as examples of Taliban determination.

The manner in which their release was arranged, however, should be of considerable concern to Canada and to every other nation that has citizens fighting or working in Afghanistan. It sets dangerous precedent for the response to kidnapping in that country and, more ominously, for the recognition of this terrorist group as a national organization.

The latter may have been the Taliban's primary goal, given that they got very little else out of this. South Korea promised to live up to a previous commitment to withdraw its troops by year's end and to put a stop to South Korean Christian evangelizing. Demands by the Taliban for an exchange of prisoners were abandoned when the Afghan government refused, and no ransom was apparently paid.

Even so, such a deal can only encourage the Taliban and al-Qaida — or any criminal group in Afghanistan — to believe that hostage-taking is a tactic that works. More seriously, it encourages them in their belief that the Western nations that support the Afghan government are soft and vulnerable.

The outcome of this crisis has been a cause for celebration in South Korea. It has also, however, undermined the authority of the government in Kabul and the sovereignty of the Afghan state by establishing that other governments can negotiate with home-grown terrorists in Afghanistan itself.

Most seriously, from a Canadian point of view, it puts Canadian soldiers and aid workers in Afghanistan even more directly in harm's way. Terrorists such as the Taliban understand completely that tactics that worked once will probably work again. They have long believed that increased Canadian casualties on the battlefield will melt support for the war effort at home; they have now learned that there is advantage to be gained in kidnapping civilians as well.