



January 24, 2008

## Canadian Military Has Quit Turning Detainees Over to Afghans

By [IAN AUSTEN](#)

OTTAWA — The Canadian military secretly stopped transferring prisoners to [Afghanistan](#)'s government in November after Canadian monitors found evidence that they were being abused and tortured.

The suspension, which began Nov. 5, was disclosed in a fax sent by government lawyers to [Amnesty International](#) and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, which are seeking to block the prisoner transfers.

The government's internal concerns about detainees is also at odds with Canadian officials' repeated public statements that the Afghan government does not engage in systematic torture.

"The denials and political posturing and name-calling that have gone on over this at various points is very disheartening when all along there's been this information," said Alex Neve, the head of Amnesty International's Canadian branch.

Despite the suspension, Mr. Neve and Jason Gretl, president of the British Columbia association, said their lawyers would appear at the Federal Court of [Canada](#) in Ottawa on Thursday to seek an injunction blocking more transfers.

"The government's recognition that the transfers have ceased raises more questions than it answers," Mr. Gretl said from Vancouver, British Columbia. He said the Canadian forces "may have transferred them to some third country, and we don't know under what conditions the Canadian government would resume transfers."

Sandra G. Buckler, the spokeswoman for Prime Minister Stephen Harper, sent an e-mail message in which she quoted the foreign affairs minister, Maxime Bernier, speaking to Parliament on Nov. 14: "During a recent visit, Canada's officials did see a [Taliban](#) prisoner with conditions that concerned them. Our officials are following up on media reports that the Afghan government has announced an investigation. The allegation has come to light because we have a good agreement with the Afghan government." She declined to comment on the status of the transfer program or the number of prisoners affected.

Until the end of 2005, Canada turned over prisoners it detained in Afghanistan to the United States military. After that practice led to objections in Canada, it began transferring prisoners to the Afghan government.

Since last May, Canadian diplomats have been allowed access to Afghan prisons to interview prisoners who were originally detained by Canadian troops.

A series of secret, e-mailed reports from Canadian monitors led to the suspension. Heavily censored versions were provided last week to the rights groups as a result of their legal action.

The reports show that the monitors found that several detainees had been beaten and threatened during Afghan interrogations. In one report, the monitors said one prisoner told them he had been beaten with cables and wires and received electrical shocks. "He showed us a number of scars on his legs which he said were caused by the beating," they wrote.

Another detainee, who said he was beaten and who had signs of injury, told the diplomatic visitors to look under a chair in the room in which they were meeting. "Under the chair we found a large piece of braided electrical cable as well as a rubber hose," the report said.

[Copyright 2008 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)

---