



News Release

For immediate release

Commission to Launch Probe into Afghanistan Complaint

OTTAWA, February 9, 2007 – Peter A. Tinsley, Chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission (MPCC), today announced a public interest investigation into allegations involving military police conduct in Afghanistan.

The decision relates to a formal complaint received by the Commission on January 29, 2007. The complainant cites evidence of possible abuse of three individuals apprehended and detained by members of the Canadian Forces (CF) in April 2006 in the Kandahar Region of Afghanistan. The individuals were held by CF military police before being handed over to Afghan authorities.

In his letter, the complainant alleges that Canadian military police failed to safeguard the well-being of the detainees. Further, he alleges they failed to properly investigate the cause of various injuries which may have been sustained by the detainees while in the custody of Canadian Forces personnel.

“Under the National Defence Act, the Chair of the MPCC may launch an investigation at any stage of a complaint against military police if it is deemed in the public interest to do so,” stated Mr. Tinsley. “An independent investigation that produces a final public report will help to ensure continued public confidence in the military and the military police.”

In his decision communicated to the Minister of National Defence, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal (CFPM), Mr. Tinsley cited the seriousness of the allegations as one of several compelling reasons to proceed with the public interest investigation.

“The possible abuse of defenceless persons in CF custody, regardless of their actions prior to apprehension, and the possibility that military police members may have knowingly or negligently failed to investigate such abuse and may otherwise have failed to follow proper protocols for the treatment of detainees, are matters of serious concern,” he wrote.

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Other determining factors cited by the Chair include the unique circumstances of the case and the intense media and public attention it has generated.

“I also share the complainant’s concern that the relevant military authorities have already had considerable opportunity to investigate this matter internally, but have waited until this public complaint to do so,” he added.

Mr. Tinsley has reserved a decision on whether to hold a public hearing into the complaint. “If our investigation uncovers evidence such that a public hearing would be warranted, or if the additional powers of a hearing are required to obtain relevant evidence, then I will exercise my authority to convene one,” said Mr. Tinsley.

The MPCC probe will be carefully coordinated with the criminal investigation to be led by the CF National Investigation Service (NIS), a specialized investigative unit of the military police.

Established by Parliament in 1998, the role of the MPCC is to assure Canadians that allegations of police misconduct are investigated fully and that Canada's 1,200 military police officers are able to carry out their investigations free of interference from the chain of command.

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