

## Canada resumes Afghan detainee transfers

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GLOBE AND MAIL UPDATE

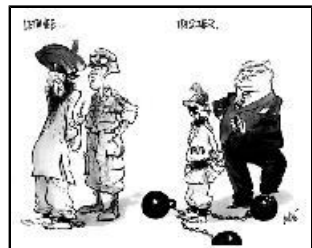
FEBRUARY 29, 2008 AT 8:44 AM EST

KABUL — Canada has resumed transfers of detainees to Afghan custody, officials announced today, saying they're satisfied with local authorities' new safeguards against torture.

Many details of the handovers were kept secret as Canadian officials spoke with reporters via teleconference.

They declined to say when the transfers resumed, how many have been transferred, or whether Canada has now emptied the makeshift prison facility at Kandahar Air Field that held a growing number of detainees for almost four months.

The transfers halted on Nov. 6, one day after Canadian officials discovered first-hand evidence of torture inside a detention facility operated by the National Directorate of Security, Afghanistan's feared intelligence service.



[Enlarge Image](#)

*(Tony Jenkins/The Globe and Mail)*

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But the NDS has acted quickly to mollify the Canadians' fears about detainee abuse, said Ron Hoffmann, deputy head of the Canadian embassy in Kabul.

“Our experience to date with the Afghans is they have taken all the allegations of mistreatment very seriously,” Mr. Hoffmann said.

The Afghan government has been lobbying Canada to resume its transfers, in part because the cutoff indicated Canada's belief that detainees face torture in the Afghan system — a propaganda victory for the Taliban, Afghan officials argued, and a source of friction with other NATO allies in southern Afghanistan who are also bound by legal conventions that forbid sending detainees into the hands of known torturers.

“We are satisfied that based on the facts, the transfers can resume,” said Lieutenant-Colonel Grant Dame, chief of staff for the Canadian task force in Kandahar.

In a statement read to reporters, Canadian officials listed ways they believe that conditions in Afghan custody have changed in recent months:

- A senior NDS official in Kandahar has been arrested and held in custody for his suspected role in the case of torture documented by Canadian officials.
- Canada has started a new training program for prison officials, teaching them human-rights principles and proper interrogation methods.
- Two senior NDS officials from Kabul have been assigned to supervise reform efforts at the Kandahar facility.
- Record-keeping has improved at the NDS facility, including photography of new detainees.
- A doctor visits the NDS facility every week to provide medical care to detainees.

Canadian officials have also visited the NDS Kandahar facility more than two dozen times since Nov. 5, exercising their right to conduct inspections under a new agreement that Canada signed last year in the wake of The Globe and Mail's investigation of detainee abuse.

But the Canadians still don't follow up their observations from those visits with any investigation of their own, Mr. Hoffmann said. Since the signing of the new agreement on May 3, he said, Canadian monitoring teams have found eight allegations of detainee mistreatment in NDS custody.

Responsibility for investigating those abuse claims belongs to Kandahar's Attorney General, Mr. Hoffmann said, and in every case the Afghan authorities have responded with a statement saying the allegations were unfounded.

"I can't speak to the specifics of those investigations, just the results," Mr. Hoffmann said.

Besides trying to reform procedures at the NDS, Canada has also announced \$1.5-million in projects to improve physical conditions at the facility and also the Sarpoza prison where many detainees eventually serve out their sentences. The projects include septic and cistern cleaning and repair; upgrading an infirmary; providing 200 prisoner uniforms; improved ventilation; internationally approved hand and leg restraints to replace the heavy chains and locks regularly used on prisoners; and a donation of 350 mattresses to Sarpoza prison.

Despite all of Canada's work in the corrections system, Mr. Hoffmann also indicated that the Canadians want to remain at arm's length from Afghan jails.

"Canada is not in the business of building or managing correctional facilities in Afghanistan," he said.

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