

## Afghan prison official was fired after complaint, MacKay says

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OTTAWA — An Afghan prison official has been removed from his job in the wake of torture allegations that prompted Canada to suspend the handover of detainees last fall, Canada's Defence Minister said yesterday.

Peter MacKay told reporters that the individual was removed after Canada complained to Kandahar Governor Asadullah Khalid, as well as to Afghanistan's defence minister.

"What I can tell you is that the individual was removed from his position in the Afghan prison," Mr. MacKay said. "The investigation, as I understand it, continues and the final outcome of that investigation I expect will be known soon."

Mr. MacKay also expressed surprise yesterday that Mr. Khalid said he doesn't recall meeting with Mr. MacKay in Kandahar in November, when the minister said he raised the issue of prisoner treatment.

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"This is something for the military, it doesn't involve me," Mr. Khalid said in an interview with The Canadian Press.

"I was surprised to hear of this denial and of the fact that he didn't recall the conversation," Mr. MacKay said. "I remember it very well."

Mr. MacKay said he met with Mr. Khalid within hours of what Canada considered a credible allegation of torture.

"I made it very clear to Governor Khalid that these allegations were very serious and that prisoner abuse would not be tolerated, should not be tolerated by this government."

He said he then delivered the same message to his defence ministry counterpart in the capital, Kabul.

Mr. Khalid was the subject of controversy last week when it emerged in a Canadian diplomatic report that he was alleged to have participated in an unrelated incident involving the torture of an Afghan prisoner.

Two Canadian diplomats were told of the allegations by a prisoner who said he had been interrogated, beaten and administered an electrical shock by an individual whose name was blacked out of their report. Sources have told The Globe and Mail that the individual was Mr. Khalid.

Mr. MacKay couldn't say whether the allegations were investigated by Canadian authorities.

Mr. MacKay ceased being the foreign affairs minister two months after the document was prepared.

"What I'm aware of was that there was a single allegation which did not emanate from a Taliban prisoner that was turned over by Canadian forces," he said.

Canada has said that the matter is the responsibility of the Afghan government because the prisoner had not been captured by the Canadians.

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