

Chief of the Defence Staff



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11 December 2009

The Honorable Maxime Bernier
Chair
Standing Committee on National Defence
Room 466, Confederation Building
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Mr. Chair,

The intent of this letter is to correct the statement I made before the Standing Committee on National Defence on Tuesday, December 8th 2009, with respect to the event surrounding the Canadian Forces personnel that intervened to safeguard an individual that the Afghan National Police had in custody, when they saw something was not right. I had based my previous assessment on operations reports, which I confirmed by speaking with a number of members of the chain of command that were part of Task Force Orion in June of 2006.

Since then, I was informed by my staff, who have been researching the case to ensure the completeness of all the information, that a report, written by the section commander of the day is not totally consistent with the operations report and the information provided to me by the chain of command at the time. The new information sheds important details on what occurred on the day on the 14th of June 2006. The individual who was beaten by the Afghan police was, in fact, in Canadian custody. The Afghan National Police then took control of him to facilitate his movement from the battlefield to Forward Operating Base Wilson.

I would like to refer to his statement and quote parts of it. The statement written by the section commander of the day indicates that they stopped and searched a vehicle.

"There were three individuals in a white van and they got a very weird feel from one of them. I had the interpreter along and he verified that an individual was in

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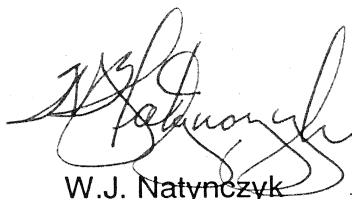
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all probability an enemy Taliban, due to his accent and his false story about being from Kandahar City. So I had him lie down on his stomach and then conducted a detailed search. I had him empty his pockets prior to this, catalogued all the items and then took down his particulars. We then photographed the individual prior to handing him over to ensure that if the Afghan National Police did assault him, as it happened in the past, that we would have a visual record of his condition. The Afghan National Police section commander then arrived and asked the suspect a couple of questions, and concurred with our assessment that the individual was enemy. We, in good faith, handed the person under custody over to them so that he could be transported to the Zari district center (Forward Operational Base Wilson), where the military police could process him. That was the last time I saw him” The Canadian Military Police then found out that this individual had been severely beaten by the Afghan National Police so they intervened to take him back.

I would like to tell the members of the Committee that I did not have this information in May of 2007 nor last Tuesday when I made my statement. Nevertheless, I am responsible for the information provided by the Canadian Forces, and I am accountable for it. I intend to launch a Board of Inquiry as to why it took so long for this information to get to the Chief of Defence Staff, both my predecessor and me. Nonetheless, I accept the Military Police report to be accurate. However, I am proud that our soldiers acted courageously and ethically when they retrieved the individual from the Afghan National Police, when it was apparent that he had been injured. This is the kind of decisive action soldiers make on a battlefield and I am proud of our soldiers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.J. Natynczyk', written in a cursive style.

W.J. Natynczyk
General