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Sexual abuse of children rampant in Afghanistan

July 16, 2013

A documentary prepared and released by British journalist Ben Anderson on child sex abuse in Afghanistan has raised questions about why it has taken 5 years to complete investigation into allegations that officers told soldiers to ignore cases of sex abuse against boys in Afghanistan.

The 90-minutes documentary titled ‘This is What Winning Looks Like’ offers a sobering look at Afghanistan, a decade after Canadian and other western armies arrived in the country.

The documentary reflects Afghan police keeping young boys as sex slaves, a practice known as bacha bazi, or “boy play,” as an open secret in Sangin, a town of 14,000 in Helmand.

U.S. Marine Maj. Bill Steuber raised the issue with the deputy police chief Qatab Khan during a meeting in November 2012, but was left surprised with disbelief after Khan mocked the idea that his men shouldn’t have sex with the boys.

Khan reportedly told Man. Bill Steuber that his men would be left with few options other than their own grandmothers.

“If you walked just 500 metres from the (Forward Operating Base) in Sangin, you saw evidence of child abuse,” Anderson said quoted by Toronto Star said.

He said, “The police discussed it openly. The local council members and district governor discussed it openly. All the (International Security Assistance Force) forces who went out on patrol knew about it.”

“I could have collected irrefutable evidence of abuse by the most senior police officers present in five days. I have no idea how any investigation into this could take five years,” Steuber added.

Around 87 witnesses have been interviewed by two inquiry board investigators after a preliminary investigation into the claims concluded in 2010 and since then, and the case has been under review by the office of the Canadian army’s deputy commander, currently Maj. Gen. P.F. Wynnyk.

The inquiry board investigators have also collected more than 30,000 pages of documents, according to the Star.