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The Canadian Press

Whistleblower: Afghan prisoners at high risk of abuse

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War prisoners in Afghanistan faced a "high risk" of abuse and torture, a diplomatic whistleblower told a military watchdog on Tuesday.

In a second round of explosive public testimony, diplomat Richard Colvin told the Military Police Complaints Commission that he and his colleagues in Afghanistan knew of "patterns of risk facing our detainees."

"It wasn't that Abdullah has been mistreated," he said. "It was that a group of detainees transferred by Canada were vulnerable of mistreatment or being mistreated."

Rumours persisted that Kandahar's former governor, Asadullah Khalid, kept secret jails, added Colvin, whose testimony at a parliamentary committee last year caused a sensation.

He also detailed other allegations swirling around Khalid, which included sexually abusing young girls and the governor's "heavy" drug use.

"I had a lot of negative information on Mr. Khalid," Colvin said.

"Generally, among people we met, it was quite hard to find someone who had a good thing to say about him."

Colvin told a parliamentary committee last year that Canada ignored warnings of torture involving detainees in Afghanistan.

At the time he said nearly all prisoners captured by Canadian troops in 2006 and 2007 were tortured by Afghan authorities.

Generals, senior federal officials and cabinet ministers have denied the charges.

The commission is investigating an allegation from Amnesty International Canada and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association.

The groups say military police did not properly investigate officers responsible for directing the transfer of detainees to Afghan authorities, allegedly at the risk of torture.

Transferring prisoners between countries knowing they likely face torture is considered a war crime.