

TRANSLATORS IN AFGHANISTAN

- Veterans Affairs Canada provides benefits and services to members and Veterans, defined in legislation as officers or non-commissioned members of the Canadian Armed Forces.
- The Department of National Defence hired Canadian citizens to work alongside the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan as translators. These individuals do not have access to Veterans Affairs Canada benefits.
- Veterans Affairs Canada will continue to work closely with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces on this issue.
- We are grateful to these individuals for their service to Canada.

WHEN PRESSED:

Q1 – Can VAC provide benefits to civilians?

Yes, under certain circumstances that are within our legislation. For example: the *Civilian War-related Benefits Act* (for certain civilians who were injured in an action or counteraction during WWII) and the *Flying Accidents Compensation Regulations* (for certain federal employees who are injured during a flight undertaken in the course of duty).

Q2 – Why is Veterans Affairs Canada not currently helping this group?

This group does not meet the eligibility criteria outlined in legislation. Veterans Affairs Canada does not have authority to provide benefits or services to other individuals.

Q3 – What would be required for civilian translators to access VAC benefits?

Veterans Affairs Canada legislation would need to be updated to include this specific group, or the *National Defence Act* would need to be amended to modify the definition of a 'member'.

BACKGROUND — TRANSLATORS IN AFGHANISTAN

During the Afghanistan conflict, approximately 65 Canadian citizens, mostly of Afghanistan and Pakistani heritage, were recruited to work as civilian Language and Cultural Advisors (LCAs) in Afghanistan.

They worked alongside deployed Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members on the front lines during combat operations (Kandahar 2006-2011; Kabul 2012-2014) and they have had difficulty receiving assistance for their disabilities, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which they attribute to their time working in Afghanistan.

The Canadian citizen LCAs are distinct from the Afghanistan citizen interpreters who were also hired by DND/CAF and worked alongside the military in Afghanistan. However, both are commonly called “translators.”

The CBC has reported that many of the claims made by LCAs to the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board were initially denied but that some were being reconsidered after the media attention.

In a [March 8, 2024 letter](#) to the Minister of National Defence, the DND/CAF Ombudsman indicated that any considerations to address gaps in service to the LCAs must include:

- Public recognition and commemoration of the Canadian Citizens who deployed as LCAs while employed by the Department of National Defence;
- The determination of a suitable financial recognition; and,
- Assessments to all LCAs who have been affected by their service in Afghanistan to determine any gaps in the physical and psychological care required, and based on these assessments, fund a reasonable care plan.