

# Translators in Afghanistan

## Issue

The Interim Ombud for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, Robyn Hynes, is expected to issue a report with recommendations to the Minister of National Defence early in 2025, respecting Language and Cultural Advisors who worked alongside Canadian Armed Forces personnel in Afghanistan.

## Context

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). 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 Office of the Ombud for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces has been investigating the issue.

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.”

Pursuant to the *Government Employees Compensation Act*, federal employees who are injured at work receive benefits from the Government of Canada through workers’ compensation. The Federal Workers’ Compensation Service of Employment and Social Development Canada partners with provincial workers’ compensation boards to deliver these benefits. In the case of the LCAs, the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is responsible for assisting them, but complaints have been made about delayed assistance or no assistance at all.

There are limited instances where civilians have been made eligible for VAC benefits. For example:

- The *Civilian War-related Benefits Act* provides eligibility to certain civilians (e.g., Overseas Welfare Workers, Canadian Civilian Air Crew of the Royal Air Force Transport Command) who were injured in an action or counteraction during WWII; and,
- The *Flying Accidents Compensation Regulations* under the *Aeronautics Act* provides eligibility to either the *Pension Act* or the *Government Employees*

*Compensation Act* (as chosen by the claimant) for federal employees or their dependents who are injured or die as a direct result of a non-scheduled flight undertaken in the course of duty, or in the case of a civil aviation inspector where they are injured or die as a direct result of any flight undertaken for the purpose of conducting a flight test or monitoring commercial air operations on that flight.

In other circumstances, new programs have been created by the Federal Government to provide financial benefits/health care support to civilians who are not eligible for the same benefits as members and Veterans. For example, the “1974 Valcartier Grenade Incident Program” was announced on March 9, 2017, by the Minister of National Defence to compensate the victims and families of the grenade explosion that killed six young cadets during a training course.

## Key Updates

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.

On November 14, 2024, [CBC reported](#) that Robyn Hynes, Interim Ombud for the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces, delivered her findings respecting the LCAs to the Department of National Defence on November 11, 2024, and that her final report with recommendations is set to be released to the Minister of National Defence early in 2025.

No update has yet been provided by the Department of National Defence to Veterans Affairs Canada respecting the November 11, 2024, meeting. Therefore, it is unknown at this time whether the recommendations will impact Veterans Affairs Canada or not.