

Roland Paris
Director, Centre for International Policy Studies
University of Ottawa
55 Laurier Avenue East, Room 11121
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

February 8, 2009

Robert Marleau
Information Commissioner
Tower B, Place de Ville
112 Kent Street, 22nd Floor
Ottawa ON K1A 1H3

Dear Mr. Marleau,

I am writing in reference to my access to information request (A-2008-00052), which I submitted to the Department of National Defence (DND) in April 2008. My request was for: "Copies of any and all public opinion surveys conducted in Afghanistan among the Afghan population from 1 January 2006 to 5 April 2008. Please provide full results for each survey including any notes on methodology."

In response to my request, I recently received a letter from Julie Jansen, Director, Access to Information and Privacy, DND, dated February 2, 2009. Attached to that letter was a CD-ROM with redacted copies of the summary results from four waves of a survey of Afghans living in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. All four waves of the survey were all titled "Kandahar Province Survey."

I am writing to you because I am dissatisfied with the information provided by DND.

1. Questionable Redactions

I am dismayed by DND's sweeping application of s. 15 (1) of the Act – the national security section – in this case. Nearly all of the survey results were redacted under s. 15 (1). Withheld information included survey responses to questions that, in my view, could not reasonably be expected to be injurious to the conduct of Canada's international affairs, the defence of Canada or any state allied or associated with Canada or the detection, prevention or suppression of subversive or hostile activities.

Examples of inappropriately redacted information included the responses to the following survey questions:

- Is your family becoming more or less prosperous?
- What are the three biggest problems facing the whole country of Afghanistan today?
- Are you satisfied with the provision of employment in your area?
- How satisfied are you with the provision of healthcare services in your area?
- Do boys/girls in this household...attend school?
- Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of the ANP [Afghan National Police]?
- Are you satisfied with the efforts of the Afghan Government to improve the quality of life of people like yourself?
- Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of ISAF / Foreign Troops?

I would welcome a detailed explanation of why the responses to these and the other survey questions could be justifiably redacted under s. 15(1).

2. Limited Information

My request was for “copies of any and all public opinion surveys conducted in Afghanistan among the Afghan population from 1 January 2006 to 5 April 2008.” I am struck by the fact that the documents DND collected and delivered to me included only four waves of a single survey. That would seem to indicate that DND does not possess any other public opinion surveys conducted in Afghanistan among the Afghan population during the dates specified in my request. However, I find it dubious that DND has in its possession only the Kandahar Province Survey, and would welcome your assistance in finding out whether DND possesses other surveys that match the criteria of my request and that DND did not provide in response to my request.

Further, my request was for “full results for each survey including any notes on methodology.” The documents that I received, however, were the summary results of the Kandahar Province Survey, not the full results. Again, while it is possible that DND does not possess the full results of the four waves of this survey, I am dubious, and I would appreciate your assistance in determining whether the full results were inappropriately withheld.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Roland Paris