



NEWS RELEASE

Headquarters
International Security Assistance Force – Afghanistan



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Afghan Journalists Released From Coalition Force Custody

KABUL, Afghanistan (September 24) – Coalition forces have released two men who were detained during Afghan and coalition force operations earlier this week. Rahmatullah Nekzad, a freelance videographer and reporter for Al-Jazeera and the Associated Press, was detained Monday in Ghazni, and Mohammed Nader, an Al-Jazeera videographer was detained Wednesday in Kandahar. Both were detained after intelligence linked them to Taliban propaganda networks. During questioning, both reporters admitted having routine contact with the Taliban.

"After reviewing the initial intelligence and information received during questioning, the two men were not considered a significant security threat and were released," said Rear Admiral Gregory Smith, Director of Communication, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). "During their brief detention they were treated humanely and in accordance with international law and U.S. policies."

Both men went through the same process as all detainees, with each case examined and reviewed in accordance with standard ISAF and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan procedures. Based on results of a review, a detainee may be retained for further questioning if sufficient information warrants, transferred to Afghan authorities for detention and criminal prosecution, transferred to Afghan authorities for participation in a reconciliation program, or released without conditions. The reporters were released without conditions.

"No news agency working in Afghanistan was targeted as part of these operations, and no guilt or innocence is presumed by our activities," said Rear Admiral Smith. "The operations were conducted with our Afghan partners and based on intelligence gathered over an extended period of time, focusing on insurgent propaganda networks and their affiliates."

A discussion earlier today between Rear Admiral Smith and Samer Allawi, Al Jazeera Kabul Bureau Chief, focused on the basis for detention of the two journalists, and Al Jazeera's acceptance of responsibility for their conduct. The Doha-based news organization pledged to uphold the highest journalistic standards for their reporting in Afghanistan.

ISAF will also work closely with the Government of Afghanistan and its Ministry of Information and Culture to ensure that security operations are conducted to prevent Taliban influence from being spread through propaganda, and that journalists are treated with respect as they endure the challenge of reporting in an often dangerous and complex environment.

Hojatullah Mujadadi, a journalist with RTA working in Kapisa Province who was detained earlier this week by Afghan security forces, has been released by Afghan authorities.

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