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Newmarket, Ontario- An exasperated House Leader, Peter Van Loan, on Canada AM, Monday morning, bellowed: "our main concern is for the safety and security of our troops. This was an attempt to explain the government's less than frank explanation of their handling of prisoners in Afghanistan." Sinclair Stevens, Progressive Canadian Party Leader, said today.

"So lets talk about the safety and security of our troops", Mr. Stevens added.

John Manley in his report last week made it clear we need "new medium-lift helicopters and high performance unmanned aerial vehicles" if we are going to extend our mission beyond February 2009.

By inference we need them today. "Where are they"?

Under the Harper government's direction 70 Canadian troops have been killed so far in Afghanistan for the want of proper equipment.

Colin Kenny, Chair of the Canadian Senate Committee on National Security and Defence points out, "Between February 2006 and August 2007, the percentage of Canadian troops killed in action is more than three times higher than that of the British, four times that of the Americans, and six times that of the Dutch".

With that background, Mr. Kenny's committee should immediately hold an inquiry into why, knowing vital helicopters and other road safety devices were needed Prime Minister Harper extended our troop involvement all the way to February 2009.

It is ironic that Mr. Manley, a Liberal cabinet minister at the time, was instrumental in the cancellation of those same helicopters. In fact, that cancellation led to speculation that we were going to have to send our outdated and dilapidated Sea King helicopters to Afghanistan instead, leaving our troops in harm's way no matter what the outcome.

Mr. Stevens went on to say that Mr. Manley's report is not an independent panel report as claimed; instead, the report is an attempt to justify an action taken by Mr. Manley when he was Deputy Prime Minister of Canada as well as Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Public Security and Anti-terrorism, the counterpart of Tom Ridge, President Bush's then appointee to the position of Homeland Security Chief.

"The Afghan involvement by Canada was really "Manley's Mission" when the Liberals were in power", Mr. Stevens added.

"Unfortunately, wanting to please President George Bush, Prime Minister Harper, when he gained power in 2006 took over the Mission with disastrous results", Mr. Stevens said.

"Whether or not Canadians support the war they support the troops. Be they bought, rented, loaned or begged helicopters must be obtained forthwith and whatever the cost their acquisition will be supported for the alternative is unacceptable." Stevens concluded.

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