

## Reports say Chinese-made weapons used by Taliban



**A Chinese shoulder-launched missile held by a Taliban insurgent is seen in this screen grab of a photo provided courtesy of The Washington Times.**

CTV.ca News Staff

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Despite allegations that Chinese-made weapons are falling into Taliban hands and further endangering Canadian soldiers, Canada's foreign affairs minister never addressed the issue to his Chinese counterpart during the APEC summit last week, CTV News has learned.

Both U.S. and British officials have questioned China on the weapons, while Defence Minister Peter MacKay acknowledged Wednesday he's worried about the reports.

"We're concerned about any country -- neighbouring country or otherwise -- that embarks in the arming of the Taliban, a terrorist organization," said MacKay in Halifax.

Asked if he had spoken to China about the issue, he replied: "I have not personally spoken directly with the Chinese, but we know that officials are undertaking efforts to verify some of this information as we speak."

U.S. and British soldiers have recovered new armour-piercing roadside bombs, which they allege have been manufactured in China and sent into Afghanistan through Iran.

And just last month, Canadian soldiers say they discovered a Chinese-made mortar near the site of a roadside explosion that killed Pte. Simon Longtin.

In the past six months, 19 Canadian soldiers have died from roadside bombs.

"Unavoidably and unfortunately, Canadian soldiers might be falling victim to those weapons," said Michel Juneau-Katsuya, a former CSIS intelligence officer now with the Northgate Group, a security firm.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier travelled with Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Australia last week, to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's leaders' summit in Sydney.

But sources told CTV News he never raised concerns about whether Chinese-made weapons were being used against Canadian troops in Afghanistan by insurgents.

"Why didn't Mr. Bernier take the time to ask that question, since Canada and our troops are on the front lines now?" asked Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre.

A former adviser to Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day said the government should be pressing the issue with China.

"We should be telling them they have a choice: they can either be friends with the Taliban or they can be friends with us," said Scott Newark.

Earlier this month, an unidentified senior Afghan official acknowledged the problem to the BBC, saying: "Chinese HN-5 anti-aircraft missiles are with the Taliban, we know this... and we are worried where the Taliban gets them. Some of these weapons have been made recently in Chinese factories."

But Lu Shumin, China's ambassador to Canada, denied the allegations.

"Clearly, this is groundless. China has very strict rules on selling our weapons," he said.

With a report by CTV Ottawa Bureau Chief Robert Fife



**Defence Minister Peter MacKay speaks at a news conference in Fredericton, N.B. on Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2007.**



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