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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

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The Sun

British soldiers sexually abused Afghan children

01/18/2012

Britain's military says it is investigating allegations of inappropriate behavior by British troops in Afghanistan.

The Sun newspaper on Wednesday reported that two soldiers had been arrested for allegedly sexually abusing an Afghan boy and girl, both around 10-years-old, and videotaping the incident.

The British Defense Ministry says the investigations branch of the Royal Military Police has launched a probe into the allegations, which come a week after a video surfaced showing U.S. soldiers urinating on Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.

The Afghan government said Wednesday it was deeply disturbed by the reports that British soldiers encouraged two Afghan children to touch them. The government strongly denounced what it called the "immoral act."

The government also said it was "immensely disgusted by the rise in recent incidents of immoral nature among foreign soldiers that clearly undermine public confidence and the Afghan people's cooperation with foreign troops."

The NATO force in Afghanistan said it was aware of Britain's probe into the incident. The coalition said Wednesday such allegations are taken "very seriously" and that it expects all NATO troops to adhere to the highest standards of military service.

Several laptops have been seized and their contents scoured by a team of military cops assigned to the inquiry.

It is the first time allegations of abusing children have been levelled against British troops in either Afghanistan or Iraq.

A source close to the probe said last night: "Nothing has been proved. What we have to establish is whether we are looking at sexual predatory behaviour or totally ill-judged larking about.

"Whatever the case, it is utterly inappropriate and terribly damaging to the British Army's reputation in Afghanistan." A senior defence source added: "We are determined to get to the bottom of this ASAP. Any criminal behaviour will be dealt with robustly and must not be allowed to undermine the excellent work our armed forces are doing in Afghanistan."

The allegations come days after the US military was rocked by video said to show Marines urinating on Taliban corpses.