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Final tally says 2,000 Canadians wounded in Afghanistan

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Defence department figures released Wednesday have put the final, official tally on the number of Canadian soldiers wounded during the 10-year Afghanistan combat mission at more than 2,000.

Twenty soldiers were wounded in action in 2011, the lowest number since Canada took over responsibility of Kandahar in 2005. A further 168 received what were classified as "non-battle injuries."

That brings the total number of Canadian soldiers wounded in action from the start of the mission in April 2002 to the end this past December at 635, with another 1,412 having suffered non-battle injuries.

Four Canadian soldiers were killed in 2011, bringing the total to 158.

History will show that 2009 was the bloodiest year as Canadian soldiers suffered roadside and suicide bomb attacks while patrolling Kandahar, came under rocket and mortar attack in their

encampments and engaged in sporadic firefights with an elusive foe. In that year alone, 454 Canadians were wounded and 32 were killed.

The defence department classifies injuries and deaths in action as those suffered as a direct result of combat, including explosives, mines, rocket attacks and direct fire, as well as friendly-fire incidents.

Non-battle injuries include traffic accidents, the accidental discharge of a weapon and other accidental injuries not related to combat.

The defence department figures, however, do not include the thousands of Canadian soldiers who are suffering from post-traumatic stress and other psychological damage.

A recent defence department study predicted as many as 13.2 per cent of the 40,000 Canadians who served in Afghanistan could be suffering from Afghanistan-related mental injuries.

While the end of the winding-down of the combat mission in Kandahar over the past two years saw the number of soldiers killed and wounded decline significantly, the presence of 950 Canadian military trainers in central Afghanistan until 2014 means the threat of injury and death has not disappeared. Canadian soldiers helped fend off an insurgent attack on a NATO compound in Kabul in September, while Master Cpl. Byron Greff was killed when a suicide bomber slammed a car into a NATO bus in October.