

## France responds to Canadian NATO plea

by UPI

TORONTO -- France has responded to Canada's plea for more NATO combat troops in Afghanistan at a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Lithuania, Canadian media reported. Thursday, Canadian Defense Minister Peter MacKay told the ministers Ottawa wanted a firm commitment of 1,000 more combat troops in southern Afghanistan or it was likely the Canadian Parliament would vote to end the mission in February 2009, a Globe and Mail correspondent reported Friday from Vilnius. French Defense Minister Herve Morin said a Canadian delegation would begin talks Friday in Paris about France enlarging its role in Afghanistan. "I said that we would help the Canadians. I know (French President Nicolas Sarkozy) has extraordinary relations with your head of government and I indicated to him that all this must be done as part of a global reflection on the reorganization of NATO forces," Morin said at a news conference. France has 1,900 troops in relatively calm northern Afghanistan. There have been reports in French media Paris was considering sending 700 paratroopers to the violent Kandahar region where Canadians are deployed but Morin said the reports were premature, the report said.

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