

## Report: Taliban to release hostages soon

*by UPI*

SEOUL - A Taliban spokesman in Afghanistan told South Korea's Yonhap news agency Thursday the release of seven remaining South Korean hostages was imminent. In a telephone interview, Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said the Christian missionaries would be released in groups of three and four. On July 19, Taliban militants abducted 23 South Koreans from vehicles on the Kandahar-Kabul highway. Soon after, they shot two men from the group and dumped their bodies on a roadside, making demands Taliban prisoners be released and for an end to Christian activities. They later released two women and on Wednesday another 12. South Korean negotiators have spent the past 43 days talking with the militants and the government has denied widespread allegations it paid a ransom, the report said. Seoul agreed to stop allowing Christian missionaries to travel to Afghanistan and reiterated its plan to withdraw its 200-member reconstruction units out of Afghanistan by the end of the year.

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