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**Military Police Complaints Commission Releases Final Report in
Samson-Stopford Complaints**

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OTTAWA, 17 January 2001 – Louise Cobetto, Chairperson of the Military Police Complaints Commission (MPCC), today released her final report on a number of related issues arising from the investigation of events surrounding ex-Warrant Officer (ex-WO) Matthew Stopford.

Specifically, following a complaint from Brigadier-General (BGen) Patricia Samson, who was then the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal (CFPM), the MPCC investigated whether or not the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service (CFNIS) had misled the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Canadian public on the possibility of laying charges against soldiers who had allegedly tampered with ex-WO Stopford's coffee in Croatia in 1993.

After an in-depth investigation, the MPCC Chairperson concluded:

- There was no misconduct by BGen Samson, the CFNIS or the military police members whose conduct the MPCC investigated. Furthermore, Ms. Cobetto concluded, "the CFNIS did not mislead, intentionally or otherwise, the CDS or the Canadian public about the nature of the legal advice on which the CFNIS relied in reaching its decision not to proceed with *Criminal Code* and *National Defence Act* charges."
- There were minor inadequacies in the information delivered by the CFNIS at a May 30, 2000 news conference where the decision not to lay charges was announced. However, these inadequacies were not significant and did not have a bearing on the allegations of providing inaccurate, inadequate or misleading advice.
- Ex-Warrant Officer Stopford also filed a complaint with the MPCC to investigate allegations that misleading information had been provided to him regarding "confessions" by individuals who had apparently attempted to poison him. The MPCC report concluded there was confusion over the interpretation of the word "confessions" and that there was no intent on the part of the CFNIS to mislead ex-WO Stopford.
- With respect to the final issue relating to whether and when the military police and the chain of command became aware of the poisoning allegations, the MPCC investigation found that this was adequately reflected in the CFNIS news conference. The main point – that there was some evidence to suggest that the chain of command in Croatia was aware of the poisoning allegations – was reported by the CFNIS.

In June 2000 the complaints from BGen Samson and ex-WO Stopford were transmitted to the MPCC and the Chairperson announced her decision to hold a public interest investigation. For the purposes of this investigation, Louise Cobetto and Thomas G. Flanagan, S.C., formed the Complaints Commission.

The Commission conducted a thorough review, including hundreds of documents, and interviewed 11 key individuals over a period of 8 days, including the two complainants, BGen Samson and ex-WO Stopford. Pursuant to the *National Defence Act*, the Chairperson's interim report was transmitted to the Minister of National Defence, CDS and Judge Advocate General (JAG) in November. After reviewing the notice of action from the CDS, the Chairperson prepared her final report, which upheld her interim report findings and conclusions.

The MPCC bases its conclusions on a more extensive body of information than that reviewed previously by the Special Review Group (SRG). As a result, the MPCC has a fuller understanding of the CFNIS investigation, which allowed the MPCC to reach substantially different conclusions than those of the SRG.

Under the terms of its mandate, the MPCC conducts its investigations in both a thorough and efficient manner while exercising sole jurisdiction over monitoring and reviewing conduct complaints about the military police in carrying out their policing duties and functions. The MPCC also deals exclusively with complaints of interference in any military police investigation.

The Military Police Complaints Commission, a quasi-judicial civilian oversight authority, is external, autonomous and independent of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces. The creation of the MPCC was intended to make the handling of complaints involving the military police more transparent and accessible. As an agent of Parliament, the MPCC acts as an autonomous organization, shielded from political and bureaucratic interference.

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