

MP says minister was told June 12 about Mohamud

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John Goddard

Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon knew as early as June 12 that Suaad Hagi Mohamud was in trouble in Kenya, the woman's member of Parliament says.

"I went over to Cannon and to Deepak Obhrai (Cannon's parliamentary secretary for consular affairs)," Toronto Liberal MP Joe Volpe said yesterday, recalling the House of Commons encounter.

Six days later, Volpe put the alarming facts of the case to Cannon in writing, with copies to Obhrai and the Canadian High Commission in Kenya.

In the letter, obtained by the Star, Volpe told how his constituent, on a visit, stood accused of not looking like her Canadian passport photo. The woman's Toronto friends could not reach Canadian officials to vouch for her. The Canadians passed the woman to the Kenyans for prosecution as an "imposter."

Marked "urgent," Volpe's letter asked:

If the arrested woman is an "imposter," where is the real Suaad Hagi Mohamud, the Toronto mother of a 12-year-old boy waiting for her to come home?

Are the foreign affairs department and RCMP looking for her?

Is she safe?

Over four weeks, with the House no longer sitting, Volpe persisted with 20 emails, faxes and phone calls to Cannon and Obhrai.

In mid-July, when the file moved to the Canada Border Services Agency, Volpe started calling Public Safety Minister Peter Van Loan.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said he hadn't known about the trouble.

"When we became aware of the case last week," he said, "we asked our officials in various departments to give us some information."

Yesterday Volpe said: "I can't believe the Prime Minister didn't know about this. If he didn't, he should have the heads of two of his senior ministers on a platter."

Mohamud is to give a news conference today to say she is seeking compensation. DNA tests proved her identity and she returned home Saturday after 86 days in limbo.

The file's transfer to Canada Border services around July 17 would have alerted the Prime Minister's Office, Volpe said.

"It means the chief of staff in the communications branch of the PMO knows the file has gone from one minister to another.

"Put yourself in the shoes of the Prime Minister: People immediately below you have carriage of this file... they don't tell you this is happening?"

A spokesperson for both Cannon and Obhrai refused comment yesterday on whether either minister might have informed the Prime Minister's Office of the case.