

# US cover-up exposed in killing of Afghanistan aid worker

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British Prime Minister David Cameron yesterday admitted that British aid worker, Linda Norgrove was killed by United States forces involved in a rescue operation and not by her Afghan captors, as had previously been claimed.

Speaking at a press conference, Cameron said, “Earlier this morning, General Petraeus, in command of all ISAF forces in Afghanistan, contacted my office to inform us that in the review of the rescue operation, new information had come to light about the circumstances surrounding Linda’s death.

“General Petraeus has since told me that the review has revealed evidence to indicate that Linda may not have died at the hands of her captors as originally believed. That evidence and subsequent interviews with the personnel involved suggest that Linda could have died as a result of a grenade detonated by the task force during the assault.”

Cameron’s statement points to a deliberate cover-up by the Pentagon, with the aid of the US puppet regime in Afghanistan. The only question unanswered is whether the British government was also in the know from the start, or was, in the words of the *Telegraph*, treated “like an ill-informed and gullible patsy by our chief allies in the world”. The first scenario is the more likely.

Norgrove, 36, was killed Friday, in a predawn raid—three weeks after being seized on September 26, in the province of Kunar, near the Pakistan border, on her way to view an irrigation project she had overseen. She was the only foreigner in a team of 200 Afghans. She was being held in a mud-walled compound, in the village of Dineshgal, high in the mountains in northeastern Afghanistan.

The day after, the US began circulating its story

attributing Norgrove’s death to her captors. “Tribal elder” Jan Mohammed Khan, from the Norgal district of Kunar, was widely quoted as stating, “The captors killed the British woman as the [NATO troops were] trying to rescue her.” A “suicide vest” was found nearby, it was asserted, but it was not clear if it had been detonated or if other explosives had been used to kill the aid worker. Either way, her death was said to be the result of a “suicide vest” exploding—worn either by Norgrove or one of her captors.

Clearly off-message, an unnamed Afghan intelligence source was quoted by *Sky News*, stating that Norgrove was killed when a grenade was thrown by her captors into the room in which she was being held.

Both British and NATO officials refused to provide more specific information, but from the moment that Norgrove’s death was announced by Foreign Secretary William Hague, any other possible reason for her death was discounted. “Responsibility for this tragic outcome rests squarely with the hostage takers,” Hague said.

“There is nothing at all to suggest that US fire was the cause,” a Foreign Office spokesman said.

For 48 hours, at no point was there any suggestion that US forces had even used grenades during the raid. It was, as Colonel Richard Kemp, a former chairman of the government’s Cobra Intelligence Group, told the *Independent*, a “heartless killing...entirely in keeping with the Taliban’s normal callous brutality.”

Hague and Cameron were equally adamant that a military rescue operation had been the only means of possibly saving Norgrove’s life—a claim reiterated by Cameron yesterday. “The decision to authorise a hostage rescue operation was taken after careful consideration by the foreign secretary in the proper way and with my full support. We were clear that Linda’s life was in grave danger and the operation offered the

best chance of saving her life... Those on the ground and in London feared that she was going to be passed up the terrorist chain which would increase further the already high risk that she would be killed.”

This claim too has been revealed to be highly suspect. Three local staff members working for the aid project were taken hostage alongside Norgrove. They were all released unharmed last week. Tribal elders negotiating her release had asked NATO not to intervene, to give them more time. An Afghan intelligence official was reported as having told the BBC that the US had ignored local police and intelligence recommendations supporting the tribal elders’ stance.

Cameron’s statement also indicates that there was intense pressure placed upon the UK to agree to a military operation—and for this to be under US control. Twelve meetings of the government emergencies committee, Cobra, had taken place before Hague and the US had agreed a rescue attempt should go ahead, he said.

When asked if he had considered using British special forces to rescue Norgrove, Cameron said he followed the advice of Petraeus and it would have been “strange” to overrule US advice.

A full US/UK investigation lasting several days would take place, he promised. In reality, the investigation is an American affair. US Central Command named Special Operations officer, Major General Joseph Votel, as head of the investigation, stating only that he would work “in close co-operation with UK authorities”.

The attempted cover-up will, of course, continue and will be supported not only by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat government, but also by the Labour opposition. In response to Hague’s continued evasions in parliament, newly appointed shadow foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, helpfully declared, “We condemn utterly the actions of the hostage takers throughout these events.”

Like many previous tragic events, what has come to light points to the recklessness of the US occupation forces—which have become justifiably notorious for the number of innocents killed during their military operations. This is both in so-called “friendly-fire incidents” and as a result of the deliberate targeting of civilians for murderous assaults that are then proclaimed to be “accidents”. It is “standard operating

procedure” for the US military to deny having inflicted any civilian casualties until incontrovertible evidence emerges that it is lying.

But there are additional questions that are raised by Norgrove’s death, particularly why the Pentagon placed such enormous importance on its mounting the military operation in Kunar. One possible reason is that Norgrove, a former United Nations employee, worked for Development Alternatives Inc (DAI). DAI distributes hundreds of millions of dollars of US government funds internationally, supplied through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It has been repeatedly accused of acting as a conduit for CIA spying, destabilisation and psyops operations—in Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and other South American states, as well as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Russia and Iraq.

In Afghanistan, it has access to government funds totalling over \$50 million a year. Its employees have been a political target for the Afghan resistance.

In December 2009, five US citizens working for DAI were killed in an explosion at the USAID office in Gardez. That same day, a bomb exploded outside the DAI offices in Kabul without serious injury being incurred. In July of this year, Shaun Sexton, 29, a former member of the Parachute Regiment, was one of four people killed during an attack on the DAI’s offices in Kunduz, northern Afghanistan.

Norgrove was in charge of a project designed to persuade local farmers to abandon poppy production and move to legal crops. It was described by *The Guardian* as “part of a programme seen as key to denying the Taliban its support among the Afghan population.”



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