

Ten NATO troops killed in Afghanistan

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At least ten NATO soldiers were killed in two separate incidents in Afghanistan, when a transport helicopter carrying six US Marines crashed in Helmand province late Thursday, and an Afghan army soldier killed four French soldiers Friday at the Gwam training base in Kapisa province. Fifteen French soldiers were wounded in the attack, eight seriously.

US officials said the causes of the helicopter crash were under investigation, but they denied that enemy fire had shot down the aircraft, which they identified as a CH-53 Super Stallion transport helicopter. However, Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi told CNN: “A [CH-47] Chinook was shot down in Zubari Karez area, between Musa Qala and Zamin Dawar in southern Helmand province, and a number of foreigners traveling in it were killed.”

It was the deadliest US crash in Afghanistan since last August, when Taliban forces hit a US helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade. Eight Afghan and 30 US troops aboard were killed, including 17 Navy Seal Special Forces.

Commenting on the attack at the Gwam training base, French Defense Minister Gérard Longuet said: “During training inside the base, a gunman shot, assassinated four of our soldiers in unacceptable conditions. [The French soldiers] were not armed; they were well and truly assassinated by an Afghan soldier. We do not know for the time being if he was an infiltrated Taliban or someone who decided on his own actions, for reasons we do not know.”

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said he might consider an “early withdrawal” of French forces from Afghanistan—France’s withdrawal is currently slated for the end of 2013. Sarkozy also suspended all French training operations for Afghan troops.

François Hollande, the Socialist Party (PS) candidate in the 2012 presidential election, declared his “intention to pull [French] forces out of Afghanistan as soon as

possible, at the latest by the end of 2012.” Hollande’s party was in government in 2001 when the NATO invasion of Afghanistan began, however, and the PS supported French participation in the war at the time.

NATO officials absurdly tried to downplay tensions between the NATO occupation force in Afghanistan, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and the Afghan puppet regime’s army. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen called it a “sad day,” but added that events like the Gwam base shooting are “isolated.”

ISAF spokesman Lt. Colonel Jimmie Cummings said: “We train and are partnered with Afghan personnel every day, and we are not seeing any issues or concerns with our relationships.”

In reality, the deep popular opposition to imperialist occupation is finding reflection in a wide-ranging breakdown of relations between NATO and its Afghan proxy forces. This goes beyond the many incidents in which Afghan army forces have actually shot NATO soldiers. Coming after popular anger over last November’s US bombing of a Pakistan army outpost, which led Pakistan to block NATO supply routes to Afghanistan via Pakistan, the latest attack reveals that NATO’s network of local proxies in Central Asia is threatened with violent collapse.

Describing NATO-Afghan army relations, an Afghan army colonel told the *New York Times* yesterday, “The sense of hatred is growing rapidly.” He said Afghan troops were “thieves, liars, and drug addicts,” and that American troops were “rude, arrogant bullies who use foul language.” He added that he was afraid tension between NATO and Afghan forces “will turn into a major problem in the near future in the lower ranks of both armies.”

A May 2011 US military report titled “A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility”—a survey of 613 Afghan troops, 30 interpreters, and 215 US soldiers in

three Afghan provinces—counted 15 incidents in which Afghan soldiers shot NATO troops in the 10 months before the report was published, killing 39. This was roughly one third of NATO casualties from small arms fire in Afghanistan over that period.

The report noted, “Lethal altercations [between Afghan and US troops] are clearly not rare or isolated; they reflect a rapidly growing systemic homicide threat (the magnitude of which may be unprecedented between ‘allies’ in modern military history).” The report described official claims that “murder incidents between [the Afghan army] and ISAF are ‘isolated’ and ‘extremely rare’” as “disingenuous, if not profoundly intellectually dishonest.”

The report also cited US concerns that other Afghan troops rarely did anything to help capture Afghan soldiers who had fired at US troops as they fled.

The text of the report, which discusses Afghan and US soldiers’ complaints about each other, paints a damning picture of the NATO occupation of Afghanistan. Afghan soldiers’ complaints reflected primarily US forces’ barbaric treatment of Afghan civilians and embarrassment at being treated as inferiors by US troops in front of civilians.

The report cited the following Afghan complaints about US forces: “US convoys not allowing traffic to pass, reportedly indiscriminate return US fire that causes civilian casualties, naively using flawed intelligence sources, US forces conducting night raids/home searches, violating female privacy during searches, US road blocks, publicly searching/disarming [Afghan security forces] members as [standard operating procedure] when they enter bases, and past massacres of civilians by US forces.”

According to the report, many of these types of behaviors frequently lead to armed standoffs between NATO and Afghan forces, in which Afghan army troops threaten to fire. The report found a “generalized loathing of US soldiers” by Afghan troops.

Afghan soldiers also complained of US troops unnecessarily shooting farm animals, urinating or defecating in public (including in Afghan water supplies and in front of women), and humiliating Afghan soldiers in front of Afghan civilians, often referring to them as “mother f*ckers.”

NATO troops’ complaints about Afghan soldiers reveal widespread opposition to the war among Afghan

troops and the deeply criminal character of the US occupation regime in Afghanistan.

US soldiers complained that Afghan soldiers frankly told journalists or NATO troops themselves that once it was clear that the Taliban would win, they would switch sides. US soldiers also complained that Afghan soldiers, poorly re-supplied by the Afghan puppet government, often take US supplies instead.

Afghan leaders collaborating with NATO against the Taliban are largely drawn from a layer of warlords formed in the 1980s to fight the Soviet-backed government, backed by the US, and funded through the sale of narcotics. NATO-occupied Afghanistan has been for a decade the world’s leading supplier of opium. US troops complained widely of Afghan soldiers’ drug addiction; the study estimated that 74 percent of Afghan troops are addicted to hashish, and a somewhat smaller percentage to heroin.

While US soldiers did not raise the issue, the report also noted complaints by Canadian troops of “the cultural practice of *bachabazi* [selling boys as sex slaves to warlords], as well as the raping and sodomizing of little boys.” The report added, “One reason Afghan civilians prefer insurgents over [the Afghan army] is the latter’s propensity to seize their little boys at checkpoints and sexually assault them.”

The report described the Afghan government institutions set up by the NATO occupation as “little more than organized crime syndicates ... where accountability is almost unheard of.”



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