

# Trump intervenes on behalf of confessed war criminal Mathew Golsteyn

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The Pentagon last week charged Army Major Mathew L. Golsteyn with premeditated murder for the 2010 killing of an Afghan man during Operation Moshtarak, a major US-led offensive aimed at removing the Taliban from the city of Marjah in Afghanistan's Helmand Province. The charge carries a potential death penalty.

President Donald Trump publicly intervened in the case with a tweet Sunday morning after viewing an interview with Golsteyn's lawyer aired on "Fox and Friends," declaring that he was looking into the matter and praising the self-confessed war criminal as a hero.

"At the request of many, I will be reviewing the case of a 'U.S. Military hero,' Major Matt Golsteyn, who is charged with murder," Trump tweeted. "He could face the death penalty from our own government after he admitted to killing a Terrorist bomb maker while overseas."

Trump's intervention in the case marks yet another appeal to the increasingly politicized and right-wing layer within the top echelons of the US military. He has worked to build up his support within the military, filling his cabinet with retired generals including Defense Secretary James "Mad Dog" Mattis, who oversaw the war in Afghanistan as head of Central Command from late 2010 until 2013. Mattis notoriously urged his troops to "be polite, be courteous and have a plan to kill everyone you meet."

Trump's defense of Golsteyn contrasts with his attacks on Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who was imprisoned by the Taliban after walking off his army base in 2009 in an effort to report incompetent leadership in his platoon. The young soldier sent e-mails home to his father criticizing the war and the actions of fellow soldiers.

During his election campaign, Trump denounced

Bergdahl as a traitor and called for his execution. Trump declared that the military's decision last year not to give him any prison time was a "complete and total disgrace to our Country and to our Military." Aside from Bergdahl never admitting to cold-blooded murder, the main difference between the two soldiers is that Bergdahl dared to criticize the illegal occupation, now in its 18th year, while Golsteyn has expressed the view that the unending bloodletting in Afghanistan has been too limited.

Golsteyn admitted on two occasions, first to the CIA during a job interview in 2011 and later in an interview broadcast on Fox News in 2016, to killing a man identified by the Army as Rasoul, who was suspected of manufacturing roadside bombs that were used against US troops during the offensive.

Since being charged, Golsteyn told NBC News that he did nothing wrong and would kill again under the same circumstances. "If I'm guilty of murder they better start lining up every single person who's cleared a drone strike and labeled unknown insurgent," he said, unintentionally exposing the criminal nature of America's wars. "This is what makes me problematic. I am a recurring nightmare for them. They've wronged me."

He first confessed to the killing during a polygraph test administered by the CIA. Golsteyn told his interviewers that he had shot and then buried Rasoul after he and another soldier were ordered to release him from military custody and escort him home. Golsteyn later went back, dug up Rasoul's corpse and incinerated it in a military burn pit.

According to the Army's investigation, he told the CIA that he knew what he was doing was illegal but had no remorse for the murder as he had "solid intelligence" and was protecting his "fellow

teammates.”

One of the soldiers interviewed during the initial Army investigation in 2011 reported that Golsteyn had been angered by an IED explosion that had killed two Marines and told the soldier that he would find whoever was responsible and “kill them.”

Golsteyn’s confession sparked an initial investigation by the military that resulted in Golsteyn being stripped of a Silver Star awarded for his actions during the Battle for Marjah as well as his Special Forces tab. Apparently unable to locate any physical evidence of the murder, the military however decided at that time not to bring criminal charges.

A second military investigation was opened in 2016, resulting in last week’s murder charge, after Golsteyn again confessed to the murder, this time in an interview broadcast on Fox News. He admitted point-blank, without any hesitation, that he had killed Rasoul, who was described without any evidence by host Bret Baier as a “Talban bomb maker.”

The Battle of Marjah, the first major offensive of the surge in the imperialist occupation of the Central Asian country directed by President Barack Obama, involved the deployment of 15,000 American, British, French, Estonian, Danish, Canadian, and Afghan troops against an estimated 1,000 Taliban fighters.

The fight for control over Marjah ground on from February to December 2010 and eventually forced the temporary withdrawal of the Taliban, who subsequently returned to control of the area in 2016.

No official civilian casualty reports were issued for the battle, but an assessment by the Afghan Red Crescent found that in the first month 35 civilians had been killed, 37 injured. Fifty-five homes were destroyed in this period; in one instance, NATO rockets rained down on a group of houses killing 12 civilians, 10 from the same family.

In a war fast concluding its second decade, and under the direction of its third president, there are no indications that the US has any plans of ending its occupation of Afghanistan; in fact, the war is escalating under Trump even as the Taliban now controls more territory than at any other time since 2001.

The US Air Force dropped more bombs on Afghanistan in 2018 than in any other year of the war on record, unloading approximately 6,000 munitions through the end of October. This surpasses the total

dropped during the peak of Obama’s surge in 2011 by more than 500. The total number of deaths this year among combatants and civilians is expected to top 20,000, worse than any other year in the war.



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