

THE OTHER DRINKING SOLDIERS

In his post on our clearance for payments to Egypt, Jim noted that the key graph came 13 paragraphs into an 18 paragraph story.

Likewise, the key graph from the NYT story letting a senior American official lay out a narrative blaming the staff sergeant's massacre of Afghan civilians on marital problems comes at the end—paragraph 22 out of 25. After the official talks about the soldier snapping due to personalized stress exacerbated when one of the soldier's colleagues was gravely wounded the day before the attack, we finally learn where he got this information:

The senior American official said the account of the sergeant's state of mind came from two other soldiers with whom he drank alcohol on the night of the shootings.

Particularly given reports from survivors of the massacre there was more than one soldier—and they were drunk—I find it interesting that the suspect had been drinking with at least two other soldiers that night. Add in the report that the soldier had left the base twice, not just once.

An Afghan guard at the Nato base told the BBC that the soldier left the base twice. He returned at 00:30 local time (20:00 GMT) after the first trip out and was out between 02:00 and 04:00 for the second trip.

At the very least, you have to ask how the other soldiers the Staff Sergeant had been drinking with let him leave the base, twice. Particularly if they believed him to be as disturbed as they told the Senior official he was. But it also really raises questions about whether the

soldier was alone when he left the base the first time (if he indeed left twice, which an AP report from yesterday appears to support as well). And it raises questions about whether the other soldiers would have their own reasons—besides the prohibited drinking—to obscure what happened.

Now consider Hamid Karzai's complaint that the US did not cooperate with Afghans investigating the killing.

Karzai said on Friday that the delegation he sent to investigate the deadly shootings of 16 Afghan civilians did not receive the cooperation the Afghans expected from American officials.

The article reporting Karzai's complaint juxtaposes the complaint with negotiations on night raids.

A U.S. official said Friday that talks with the Afghan government about night raids by NATO troops are going ahead despite the alleged killing spree by a U.S. soldier and a combative statement from the Afghan president.

Now, Karzai could just be complaining because he, himself, is under a lot of stress as the Taliban presses for advantage.

But there sure does seem to be more to this killing than senior officials speaking anonymously to the NYT would like to admit.