

YET ANOTHER TALIBAN ATTACK USING AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY UNIFORMS

At the height of the green on blue killing outbreak, one aspect that stood out was that the attackers often had access to Afghan military and police uniforms whether they were actual members of these groups or not. As the Taliban shift their targets this year to attacking the Afghan military and government, it appears that the tactic of attackers disguising themselves in official uniforms is continuing. Today, there was a major attack on a court complex (and a nearby bank office) where Taliban attackers were wearing Afghan National Army Uniforms.

From the New York Times:

A group of eight Taliban insurgents dressed in Afghan Army uniforms staged a complex assault on a provincial government compound in Western Afghanistan on Wednesday morning, killing at least six officials and civilians and seizing several hostages in one of the buildings, officials and witnesses said.

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Officials said that the violence in Farah began after insurgents detonated a Ford Ranger laden with explosives near the entrance of the government compound. Government officials said the Taliban seized the second floor of the provincial court building, which is near the offices of the mayor, prosecutor and the governor, among other officials.

In addition to the at least six people killed in the attack, roughly 75 others were wounded, including women and

children, according to hospital officials. Shah Mohammad Noor, head of the regional Court for western Afghanistan, said four of the attackers had been killed so far.

"The firefight is still ongoing," said Mohammad Akram Khpalwak, the governor of Farah province. "The terrorists are still resisting."

We learn from Reuters that the timing of the attack was not random, as the court proceedings going on at the time were specifically targeted:

Five militants stormed a court in Afghanistan on Wednesday where Taliban insurgents were standing trial, killing seven people and wounding 75, officials said.

At least one of the attackers blew himself up and a gun battle between Afghan security forces and an insurgent holed up inside the court was going on in the capital of the western province of Farah, near the Iranian border, said provincial deputy governor Mohammad Younis Rasouli.

"They stormed the court as a trial was being held to convict 10 Taliban fighters," he told Reuters, adding that four civilians and three members of the security forces were killed.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in a text message to media, spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said, adding that the insurgents standing trial had been freed in the attack.

I suppose there could be a language or translation issue here, but the matter of fact statement that the "trial was being held to convict 10 Taliban fighters" kind of stands out here as not quite in line with the usual concept

of a criminal court proceeding. The willingness of a Taliban spokesman to attach his name to a text claiming credit for the attack while it was still ongoing is also pretty stunning in its own right.

ToloNews adds that a bank was targeted along with the courthouse:

Several gunmen have launched a coordinated attack on a court building and a private bank branch in western Farah province, killing at least six people and wounding more than 70 others on Wednesday morning, officials said.

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Two gunmen, wearing Afghan National Army's uniform, entered the primary court building and two others managed their way into the provincial branch of New Kabul Bank.

Extra forces have been deployed to gun-down the insurgents.

And AFP (via Dawn) informs us that the Taliban were so open in taking credit for the attack that they even posted it on their website:

Taliban militants fighting the US-backed central government immediately claimed they were behind the attack.

"Our fighters attacked several government buildings in Farah according to their planned tactic. They conducted the attack with small arms and grenades," the group said on its website.

The battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghan public now appears to be between the Afghan government and the Taliban with the US (and NATO) in the process of becoming more spectators than participants.