

AFGHANISTAN ARRESTS COLONEL FOR TURNING OVER PRISONERS TO ZAKARIA KANDAHARI

Please tell me which country follows the rule of law and which one is in the process of rebuilding its political and legal systems after war has left its government lawless and dominated by corruption.

I just can't stay away from the continually unfolding story of the death squad in the Nerkh District of Maidan Wardak Province in Afghanistan. Recall that in this post, I came to the conclusion that the death squad seems virtually certain to have been run by the CIA or CIA contractors, making denials of involvement coming from the military meaningless. The role of the shady character known as Zakaria Kandahari, and especially his sudden and complete disappearance once the situation spiraled out of control, seems especially to fit that of someone under the control of a covert CIA paramilitary group that recruits and runs militia groups.

Today, Reuters is out with a report that gives this story yet another huge development. It appears that in the course of its investigations into the disappearance, torture and murders relating to a group of 18 missing men (with the New York Times telling us Saturday that up to 14 of those bodies have now been recovered), Afghanistan has now arrested a colonel in the Afghan army for turning prisoners over to the "rogue" militia:

An Afghan army colonel has been arrested by the government for illegally handing over prisoners to a man working with a U.S. special forces team that was accused of torture and killings, three sources have told Reuters.

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A senior Afghan government official in Kabul and two officials with international organizations said the colonel, who was based in Wardak, had admitted to handing over several prisoners to a man known as Zakeria Kandahari, a shadowy figure who has spent years working with U.S. forces.

Note that Reuters says that Kandahari has worked “with US forces” for years and then consider the military’s response to this development:

A senior U.S. military official and the senior Afghan official based in Kabul said Kandahari was working with or for the Americans at the time the prisoners were handed over to him. The senior U.S. official told Reuters Kandahari had no official status with U.S. forces in Wardak.

Hmmm. So Kandahari had worked with US forces for years, but when pushed, the military says he “had no official status with US forces in Wardak”. But someone who is being run by the CIA’s paramilitary arm wouldn’t have official status with US forces, would they?

The article then goes on to quote an Afghan official as saying that poor judgment on the part of the colonel for turning the prisoners over to Kandahari for questioning (presumably, when the colonel knew the prisoners would be tortured) when Kandahari had no official status was why he was arrested.

Despite pervasive and convincing evidence that the US has repeatedly committed this same crime of turning prisoners over to foreign groups who then torture them, not a single US person has been arrested for the crime Afghanistan now seems prepared to punish. As I noted previously in the dust-up over indefinite detention without charges at Afghan prisons, there are times when

Afghanistan seems more committed to the rule of law than the US.

Update: AP is now reporting that hundreds of people have blocked a highway outside Kabul displaying more bodies they claim were freshly dug up near the Nerkh base:

Hundreds of Afghans blocked a major highway south of Kabul on Tuesday, carrying freshly dug-up bodies they claimed were victims of torture by U.S. special forces and demanding the Americans be arrested, officials said.

/snip/

The three bodies were dug up earlier on Tuesday morning near a former U.S. special forces base in Nirkh district, according to Attaullah Khogyani, the provincial governor's spokesman. Six other bodies were unearthed there in the past few weeks.

As would be expected, the story quotes a US military official denying that US special force were involved. When will the Afghans start insisting on investigating the role of the CIA?