

NATO RESPONSE TO TALIBAN ATTACKS: PUMP UP IMAGE OF AFGHAN FORCES

Because it is clear that the Obama administration steadfastly refuses to address its rapidly failing Afghanistan strategy prior to November's elections, NATO is forced to labor under the increasingly difficult prospect of handing over security responsibility to Afghan forces as the surge of NATO troops is drawn down this summer and then remaining combat troops are withdrawn over the next two years. In a desperate attempt to make that process less ludicrous, NATO chose to respond to this weekend's coordinated attacks by the Taliban by burnishing the image of Afghan security forces. After suffering greatly from repeated "isolated incidents" of Afghan forces killing NATO forces and with the devastating reports of the ineptitude and duplicity of Afghan forces from Lt. Col. Daniel Davis, the tarnished image of Afghan forces threatens to derail the planned "victory" scenario of departing Afghanistan by handing over security to Afghan forces.

AP seems to be cooperating very well with the NATO narrative, as its article this morning on the attacks carries the headline "Afghan-led forces beat back brazen Taliban attack". Yet, even their article makes it clear the Afghan forces are hardly operating on their own:

Some international forces could be seen taking part in operations to secure and retake buildings in the capital – NATO troops embedded in Afghan units as "trainers" or "mentors." And two coalition helicopters were seen firing on the building in the center of Kabul.

That admission is meant to be overlooked, as it

immediately follows praise for the Afghan forces:

U.S. Marine Gen. John Allen, the top commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, praised the Afghan security forces' response to the attacks.

Ambassador Ryan Crocker added to the information operation, praising Afghan security forces even as he was pinned inside his Embassy by the violence. From the New York Times:

The American ambassador, Ryan C. Crocker, speaking to CNN from a locked-down American Embassy, praised the Afghan security forces as having "acquitted themselves very, very well, very professionally."

Yup. Pay no attention to those embedded "mentors", just keep saying the Afghan troops were the ones who repulsed these attacks. And Crocker didn't stop there. He went on to say that all this training we're doing is going so well, we just might need to extend it (so that its failure is never exposed?):

He added that attacks like this strengthened the case for Americans staying until the Afghans were fully ready to handle the situation on their own.

Oops, be careful there Mr. Ambassador. The current information operation is meant to build up the perceived capability of Afghan forces, not cast doubt on them.

The Washington Post also is helping NATO put out its story that Afghan forces primarily were responsible for repelling the Taliban attacks. The story there carries the headline "Afghan security forces kill 36 insurgents to quell spate of deadly attacks" and General Allen is allowed to present his spin in favor of the

Afghans:

The Afghan security forces “were on scene immediately, well-led and well-coordinated. They integrated their efforts, helped protect their fellow citizens and largely kept the insurgents contained,” Gen. John R. Allen, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said in a statement.

But in the very next paragraph, we have those pesky embedded “trainers”:

Less than an hour after the attack began, members of the Afghan Crisis Response Unit and their NATO trainers entered the building from which insurgents were firing. There were two large blast holes visible in the facade of the Kabul Star Hotel, frequented by Westerners and wealthy Afghans, located just across the street.

As if multiple, simultaneous attacks in what were supposed to be the most secure regions in Afghanistan were not enough bad news, we also learn this morning that reinforcements are on the way for the Taliban, as the Pakistani Taliban have freed nearly 400 prisoners from a jail near Peshawar:

In what is being called the biggest jailbreak in Pakistani history, Taliban fighters stormed a prison in the northwestern town of Bannu early Sunday, freeing almost 400 prisoners, including a militant commander who tried in 2003 to assassinate the president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Those freed are expected to join the battle against NATO:

But the most likely destination for many of the fugitives was North Waziristan, a

lawless tribal area adjoining Bannu that is rife with militants from Al Qaeda, the Haqqani Taliban network and other militant groups, many operating on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border. North Waziristan has borne the brunt of the C.I.A.'s drone strike campaign, which the Pakistani Parliament last week demanded should end immediately.

How will NATO spin the next attacks, especially if the frequency of attacks and their complexity continue to go up? November is still a long way off.

Postscript: Just to emphasize how the information operation is being played out, at the time I started writing this post, the headline on the New York Times article was "Complex Attack by Taliban Sends Message to the West". That clearly wasn't in line with today's required messaging, so it now reads "Afghan Forces End Taliban Attack That Shook Capital". Good newspaper, you will have another "exclusive" soon.