

AP'S BURNS: ISAF SYSTEMATICALLY UNDER-REPORTING GREEN ON BLUE ATTACKS

For several months, I've been hammering on the Obama administration and the US military for describing green on blue attacks in Afghanistan, where Afghan military or police personnel attack NATO forces, as "isolated incidents". In choosing the framing of isolated incidents, these officials are ignoring a seminal report issued just under a year ago, "A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility" (pdf), which went into great detail in describing the cultural misunderstandings that lead Afghan forces to attack their coalition "partners". Shortly after the report was released as unclassified, the US seemed to realize how damaging it is to the preferred narrative of isolated incidents explaining the attacks, and so it was decided that the report should be retroactively classified.

Yesterday, the AP's Robert Burns made a major breakthrough in the story of green on blue attacks. Burns reported that the US military, in the form of ISAF, has maintained a policy of not reporting on soldiers who are wounded in green on blue attacks. As a result of reporting only fatalities, both the number of attacks and the number of coalition troops affected by them have been significantly under-reported:

The military is under-reporting the number of times that Afghan soldiers and police open fire on American and other foreign troops.

The U.S.-led coalition routinely reports each time an American or other foreign soldier is killed by an Afghan in

uniform. But The Associated Press has learned it does not report insider attacks in which the Afghan wounds – or misses – his U.S. or allied target. It also doesn't report the wounding of troops who were attacked alongside those who were killed.

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Jamie Graybeal, an ISAF spokesman in Kabul, disclosed Monday in response to repeated AP requests that in addition to 10 fatal insider attacks so far this year, there have been two others that resulted in no deaths or injuries, plus one attack that resulted in wounded, for a total of 13 attacks. The three non-fatal attacks had not previously been reported.

Graybeal also disclosed that in most of the 10 fatal attacks a number of other ISAF troops were wounded. By policy, the fact that the attacks resulted in wounded as well as a fatality is not reported, he said.

If the subject were not so serious, Graybeal's explanation for why ISAF does not report incidents in which soldiers are wounded would be laughable:

Asked to explain why non-fatal insider attacks are not reported, Graybeal said the coalition does not disclose them because it does not have consent from all coalition governments to do so.

Never mind that since the bulk of forces in Afghanistan are US, most of those wounded would be US soldiers, Graybeal would have us believe that he can't report on US soldiers being wounded because he doesn't have express permission to report when soldiers from other coalition countries are wounded in green on blue attacks.

Burns got Graybeal to repeat the “isolated incident” mantra:

Graybeal said each attack in 2012 and 2011 was “an isolated incident and has its own underlying circumstances and motives.”

Burns completes that paragraph with a reference to and a quote from the retroactively classified report, but he merely refers to it as unclassified, passing over the hypocritical actions the military took in trying to classify the report once it began to be noticed.

Congratulations to Robert Burns on his excellent work in forcing ISAF, through Graybeal, to disclose what had previously been hidden intentionally.