

AFGHANISTAN WAR: NOW WITH EVEN MORE SUCKITUDE

Just because I happened to read one post and point out a small error before going on a beach walk, Marcy had a hard time believing I really did go on vacation last week. While I was gone, one of the topics I usually track carefully went completely out of control. The rate of green on blue attacks in Afghanistan spiked dramatically, with today's nonfatal attack bringing the total to five attacks in the past week:

An Afghan policeman opened fire on NATO forces and Afghan soldiers Monday morning in the fifth apparent attack in a week by Afghan security forces on their international partners. The U.S.-led military coalition says none of its service members were killed.

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At least seven American service members have been killed in the past week by either their Afghan counterparts or attackers wearing their uniforms.

Notably, NATO is unable to deviate from its current script of claiming the attacks are all "isolated incidents" and that we should consider just how large the Afghan forces are becoming due to our superior recruiting and training:

Coalition officials say a few rogue policemen and soldiers should not taint the overall integrity of the Afghan security forces and that the attacks have not impeded plans to hand over security to Afghan forces, which will be 352,000 strong in a few months.

But the same AP article doesn't seem to buy the NATO spin:

A recent rash of “green-on-blue” attacks, in which Afghan security forces or attackers wearing their uniforms turn their guns on the coalition troops training them, has raised worries about a deterioration of trust between the two sides as well as the quality of the Afghan police and soldiers who will take over full security responsibility for fighting the Taliban when most international troops leave by the end of 2014. It also raises renewed worry that insurgents may be infiltrating the Afghan army and police despite heightened screening.

When AP wire stories begin to describe the problems with Afghan force training in terms of “deterioration of trust” and express concerns about the “quality of Afghan police and soldiers” while also pointing out infiltration by insurgents, it is clear that the Obama administration and NATO are losing their propaganda campaign in which they continue to insist that everything is just fine in Afghanistan and that progress toward the hand-off of security responsibility in 2014 is on schedule.

But the spike in green on blue attacks isn’t the only bad news in Afghanistan. In addition to attacking NATO forces, infiltrators in the Afghan police force are killing fellow policemen and defecting in large groups. Also, local officials in Afghanistan continue to be targeted in attacks.

Slightly Better News

On another front, more evidence is accumulating on improved relations and information sharing between the US intelligence community and Pakistan’s ISI. As I noted while ISI head Zaheer ul-Islam was in Washington for meetings, a Haqqani network plot was disrupted in Kabul. Yesterday, another attack in Kabul was disrupted. This time, the perpetrators are not

described as Haqqani network members but there is a Pakistan connection:

Afghan security forces foiled an insurgent plot to attack Afghanistan's parliament and the home of one of the country's leaders, Afghan officials said Sunday.

Four Afghans and a Pakistani were arrested in central Kabul late Saturday by officers from Afghanistan's intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security, together with a large amount of weapons and ammunition and some Afghan army uniforms, according to an NDS statement.

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The NDS statement said that Pakistani ID cards and money as well as Pakistani phone numbers were also found during the raid. The statement said that this demonstrated the plotters' links "with terrorists on the other side of the border" – a reference to Pakistan, which some Afghan and coalition officials have accused of sheltering and supporting insurgents.

This disrupted attack sounds very similar to the one disrupted while ul-Islam was in the US, suggesting to me that perhaps the ISI is sharing information on actions in Afghanistan being carried out by groups within Pakistan.

But there is an even stronger piece of evidence that US intelligence and the ISI are getting along much better. I had predicted that if the meetings in Washington went badly, there would be a poorly targeted drone strike in Pakistan's tribal area shortly after the meetings broke up, perhaps even while ul-Islam was in transit back to Pakistan, as happened at least once to ul-Islam's predecessor, Ahmed Shuja Pasha. But instead of a poorly targeted drone attack, there have been no drone attacks since the meetings

that were carried out August 1-3. According to the database maintained by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the most recent drone strike in Pakistan was July 29, two days before the Washington meetings started. Perhaps there really is an understanding that Pakistan can reduce US drone attacks inside Pakistan by sharing intelligence on insurgents crossing from Pakistan into Afghanistan.