

HAS AFGHANISTAN'S NATIONAL DIRECTORATE OF SECURITY INFILTRATED THE TALIBAN?

As we get into the final days before voting begins on Saturday for Afghanistan's presidential election, the biggest question aside from the issue of who will win is whether the Taliban will succeed in its determination to disrupt the election through violence and intimidation. Rapidly unfolding events today represent either a remarkable combination of good work and good luck by Afghan authorities or the product of an infiltration of the Taliban by the National Directorate of Security, which is Afghanistan's intelligence agency. Breaking news stories today inform us of Afghan forces capturing 22 tons of explosives from a Taliban hideout in Takhar province, the deaths of six Taliban commanders when a suicide vest went off "prematurely" (in Logar province) and the deaths of 16 Taliban commanders when a suicide bomber is said (by the NDS) to have developed differences with the leaders and decided to turn on them, exploding his suicide vest in Ghazni province.

Reuters brings us the story of the captured explosives:

Afghan security forces have seized more than 22 tons of explosives, enough to make hundreds of bombs, the interior ministry said on Tuesday, four days before a presidential election.

Taliban insurgents have declared war on the April 5 vote, calling it a Western-backed sham and threatening to disrupt it.

"This discovery will prevent hundreds of

bomb attacks and would have a significant impact on the overall security of the elections,” Sediq Sediqqi, an Interior Ministry spokesman, told Reuters.

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Sediqqi said the explosives, hidden in some 450 bags, were seized from a basement in the relatively peaceful northern province of Takhar, where the Taliban have gained ground in recent years.

What remarkable timing! Just four days before the election, Afghan forces find a huge cache of explosives in a “relatively peaceful” province. Four days would not have been a lot of time to produce the hundreds of bombs and distribute them to voting stations, but that is still a lot of dangerous material to be removed from use.

Moving south of Kabul to Logar province, we have this story of a suicide vest apparently going off too soon:

At least six Taliban commanders were killed following a suicide blast in eastern Logar province of Afghanistan on Tuesday.

According to NDS officials, the incident took place around 12:30 pm local time in Charkh district.

The officials further added that the Taliban commanders were looking to prepare a suicide bomber for an attack when the suicide bombing vest went off.

Hmm. It’s the NDS and not local police who are cited by Khaama Press in this story.

For the story of the suicide bomber deciding to attack the Taliban instead of voters, here is more from Khaama Press:

At least 16 senior Taliban commanders were killed following a suicide attack in eastern Ghazni province of Afghanistan on Tuesday.

Afghan Intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS) said the incident took place in a Taliban leaders gathering in Gelan district.

National Directorate of Security (NDS) following a statement said the Taliban leaders were planning coordinated attacks in Ghazni province when a Taliban suicide bomber opposed with the Taliban leaders plans and detonated his explosives.

Wow. Sixteen senior Taliban commanders is a huge gathering for one spot. And isn't it interesting that it would be during that gathering that a suicide bomber would suddenly become "opposed with the Taliban leaders plans" and decide to detonate his explosives, taking them all out? And on the very day of this event, NDS seems quite confident that the 16 killed were senior Taliban leaders. Further, the NDS even seems to already know that some of the Taliban leaders killed came from Pakistan.

So did Afghanistan get incredibly lucky today, with a premature explosion taking out 6 Taliban leaders and a difference of opinion leading to a suicide bomber changing sides to take out 16 Taliban leaders, or is there another explanation? It seems to me that we have to at least consider that the National Directorate of Security has been developing assets inside Taliban cells and is choosing this pivotal week as the time to put those assets into action. Such assets could have provided the key information leading to the discovery of the explosives cache. It is also possible that these assets could have gained control of the suicide vests that went off today, either as the suicide bombers themselves or through some form of remote control, creating the appearance of

accidents or betrayals.

Whatever caused these events, when grouped together they represent a major setback for Taliban plans to disrupt the election. Will they be able to respond?