

MURDER

In the last few days, we've got allegations of murder against two men who worked in counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, Whiskey Pete Hegseth and Rahmanullah Lakanwal.

We don't get know why Lakanwal drove from Bellingham, WA, across the country, to allegedly ambush two members of the West Virginia National Guard, Sarah Beckstrom and Andrew Wolfe. Spencer Ackerman noted that if Lakanwal came to the US committed to terrorism, he learned that commitment – and a great deal of military skills – from Americans.

[T]he most sobering fact about Wednesday's slayings is that the alleged killer, Rahmanullah Lakanwal, was all too compatible with Western Civilization.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe issued an extraordinary statement revealing that the 29-year-old Lakanwal was a "member of a partner force in Kandahar." While a knowledgeable source with deep experience in Afghanistan cautions that the US sponsored a variety of proxy forces in southern Afghanistan, much additional reporting has identified Lakanwal as a member of the Zero Units, death squads used by the CIA during the US's longest overseas war.

In other words, contrary to Miller and Trump, Lakanwal's shooting spree is not the result of importing Afghan culture to America. While much will surely be revealed in Lakanwal's upcoming trial, it looks more like the result of importing American culture to Afghanistan. The realities of blowback – the violence America experiences as the unintended consequences of the violence of US foreign policy – are what the US

needs to examine in the wake of this horrifying murder if it expects to prevent the next one.

But even Ackerman doesn't consider the possibility that something happened since – quite possibly in the last year, as Trump keeps dicking around allies of all sorts who've helped the United States in the past – that led Lakanwal to drive across the country only to target members of the Guard who had been uprooted from their homes to avenge Ed "Big Balls" Coristine.

The list of Republican governors who will uproot Guardsmen from their home, family, and (for many of them) regular jobs to go to DC continues to grow:

- *Ohio Governor Mike DeWine*
- *South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster*
- *West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey*
- *Tennessee Governor Bill Lee*
- *Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves*
- *Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry*

All of these men believe protecting Big Balls is a higher priority than protecting their own constituents.

How soon we forget that the entire reason why Trump invaded DC is that Ed "Big Balls" Coristine, one of the DOGE boys hired by the richest man in the world to snoop through the private health and social security data of Americans, got beat up by unarmed teenagers?

Contrary to what Trump and his propagandists keep squealing, Lakanwal was vetted over and over again,

The Afghan national accused of shooting two National Guard members near the White House this week underwent thorough vetting by counterterrorism authorities before entering the United States, according to people with direct knowledge of the case.

Rahmanullah Lakanwal, 29, arrived in the U.S. through Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), a Biden-era program that helped resettle Afghan nationals after the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

[snip]

A key question from critics has been whether any evacuees managed to enter the U.S. without proper vetting. Lakanwal, however, would not have been among them, according to the individuals, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the investigation. One of the individuals said Lakanwal was vetted years ago, before working with the CIA in Afghanistan, and then again before he arrived in the U.S. in 2021. Those examinations involved both the National Counterterrorism Center as well as the CIA, the person said.

Lakanwal was also granted asylum earlier this year, a process that would have brought its own scrutiny, according to #AfghanEvac, a coalition that supported the relocation effort – an assertion the White House did not dispute.

But no amount of vetting can forestall every awful possibility of violence.

Similarly, we can't even say what led our

Crusader-tatted Secretary of Defense to personally order the murder of two men who survived the first murderboat operation on September 2.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth gave a spoken directive, according to two people with direct knowledge of the operation. "The order was to kill everybody," one of them said.

A missile screamed off the Trinidad coast, striking the vessel and igniting a blaze from bow to stern. For minutes, commanders watched the boat burning on a live drone feed. As the smoke cleared, they got a jolt: Two survivors were clinging to the smoldering wreck.

The Special Operations commander overseeing the Sept. 2 attack – the opening salvo in the Trump administration's war on suspected drug traffickers in the Western Hemisphere – ordered a second strike to comply with Hegseth's instructions, two people familiar with the matter said. The two men were blown apart in the water.

Trump claims these murderboat operations combat drug trafficking. That was always suspect. Not only are many of the people killed at most low-level shippers, but killing traffickers was less useful than capturing them.

And Trump's promise to pardon former President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández, who was a major drug trafficker, suggests Trump is not so much opposed to drug trafficking, he just wants a cut.

What we do know about Hegseth, the man who ordered defenseless men to be murdered, is that the Fox News host repeatedly failed efforts to vet him – first when he was excluded from defending the Capitol after January 6, and then the multiple warnings of abuse, incompetence, and addiction reviewed during his confirmation

process.

And so it was that Pete Hegseth happily uprooted Sarah Beckstrom from her home to serve as a prop for Trump's authoritarian theater, where she was *as predicted*, targeted.

[M]ilitary commanders had warned that their deployment represented an easy "target of opportunity" for grievance-based violence. The troops, deployed in an effort to reduce crime, are untrained in law enforcement; their days are spent cleaning up trash and walking the streets in uniform. Commanders, in a memo that was included in litigation challenging the high-visibility mission in D.C., argued that this could put them in danger. The Justice Department countered that the risk was merely "speculative." It wasn't. There are costs to performatively deploying members of the military—one of which is the risk of endangering them.

Hegseth kept Beckstrom deployed even after Judge Jia Cobb ruled, six days before Beckstrom was shot, that state governors, including WV's Patrick Morrisey, don't have the authority to send their Guard to DC without being invited by DC.

[T]he out-of-state National Guards are likely operating in the District in a manner contrary to law. Under section 502(f), state law defines the permissible use of the National Guard under state control—i.e., which missions the governors can order their units to conduct. Here, the state governors whose units are currently operating in the District lack authority to order these missions because the District has not properly sought their aid under D.C. law and the EMAC.

This vetting failure, Pete Hegseth, happily obeyed Trump's order to bring even more Guard troops to DC, whose mission of "crime deterrence and passive patrolling" will now require more Metropolitan Police Department effort to protect the Guard from being targeted again.

Two alleged murderers brought demons with them from Afghanistan to the US. Both together got a young woman with all her dreams and life ahead of her killed.

And yet we're not removing the more obvious vetting problem to prevent further disasters.