

POOR RESPONSES BY US MILITARY, PRESS TO INCREASED GREEN ON BLUE ATTACKS

Yesterday, I noted the dramatic increase recently in green on blue attacks in Afghanistan, where Afghan security personnel turn their weapons on NATO forces. This disturbing development clearly has rattled both the US military and the press, because their responses have been entirely bungled.

Late yesterday, we learned from CNN that all NATO troops will now be required to carry loaded weapons at all times, even while on their bases:

The uptick in attacks by Afghan security forces against coalition troops has hit home, with all troops at NATO headquarters and all bases across Afghanistan now ordered to carry loaded weapons around the clock, CNN learned Friday.

Gen. John Allen, the NATO commander in Afghanistan, ordered the move, according to a U.S. official with direct knowledge of the orders. The order, made in recent days, was divulged amid two more so-called green-on-blue or insider attacks Friday.

This move sets the stage for accidental friendly fire deaths (blue on blue in this case) set off by an unexpected noise. If I were an enlisted US soldier with brown skin and black hair, you can bet I'd wear my uniform 24/7 on the base and be ready to dive for the floor quickly when the bullets start flying.

NATO official posturing on the attacks is at least changing slightly. Despite increasing documentation of green on blue killings and

outright defections by Afghan forces, NATO now grudgingly admits some infiltration is occurring, but their estimate seems to me to be a serious lowball:

NATO says the majority of attacks by Afghan security forces against coalition troops are driven primarily by personal grievances rather than an infiltration by insurgents.

“Some 10% we know are related to the insurgency,” Brig. Gen. Gunter Katz, a spokesman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, said late Friday.

Perhaps the most stunning failure of all, though, in the surge of coverage of increased green on blue (I still can't get completely to the new official-speak of “insider”) attacks, is this morning's brainless Washington Post article looking “behind the scenes” at an attack from last week. The Post opens by laying out a number of facts surrounding the attack:

The teenage assailant who killed three Marines last week on a U.S. military base in southern Afghanistan had easy access to the weapons arsenal of the Afghan police. He was in near-constant contact with U.S. troops, often when they were without their guns and body armor.

But although Aynoddin, 15, lived among American and Afghan security forces, he was not a soldier or a police officer. He had never been vetted. According to U.S. and Afghan officials, his role on base was hardly formal: He was the unpaid, underage personal assistant of the district police chief.

Officials would later learn that the quiet, willowy boy was also working for the insurgency.

Nowhere in the article, however, does the Post point out that it is the US, and specifically the “advisors” whom the infiltrator targeted, who had been responsible for training the Afghan security forces the youth infiltrated. Even when the article points out the egregious breach of security that allowed the local police chief to bring his boy toy onto the base, the Post fails to note that had the Afghan forces been properly trained, this never would have happened:

Aynoddin should never have been on the base in the first place, because Afghan and U.S. security standards would not have allowed it. But those standards are often violated – especially by the country’s nascent police force.

Instead, the Post allows a US military spokesman to blame the very Afghan leaders the US was supposed to have trained:

“We have to have better leadership out of our Afghan leaders. There are some things they need to step up to the plate and do now better than they’ve done,” said Marine Maj. Gen. Charles M. Gurganus, the top U.S. commander in southwestern Afghanistan. “They need to be looking in the eyes of their subordinate commanders and holding them accountable for these people who are in and out of police stations.”

With such utterly failed training of Afghan security forces and willful denying of reality by US military leaders, the current totals of 28 (or 31, depending on the news source) green on blue attacks with 38 deaths already this year can be expected to continue their rapid rise.

I hold out no hope that the press will realize the large role played by the failure to train Afghan security forces in these tragedies. As I have pointed out multiple times, the press is happy to tout the military’s claims of success

in training both in Iraq and Afghanistan. When that happens, David Petraeus is often painted as the hero in charge of training. However, training failures previously have gone unattributed and now have moved on to being overlooked entirely. Considering that David Petraeus now heads the CIA, this paragraph from near the end of the Post article stands out:

Since the Garmsir incident, top U.S. commanders in Afghanistan and defense officials in Washington have held several meetings to discuss what might be done to prevent insider attacks from occurring, according to senior defense officials. Commanders have agreed to add a counterintelligence specialist at the battalion level to help detect Taliban infiltrators. They are also considering ways to improve the Afghan vetting process.

Will Petraeus' CIA help train the counterintelligence specialists that are now needed because his once-vaunted training of Afghan forces has fallen so woefully short?