



Written by on November 5, 2009

British Soldiers Killed by Afghan Policeman

British officials announced that five British soldiers were shot and killed on November 3 by an Afghan policeman in the Nad e-Ali district of Helmand province in southern Afghanistan. British military officials said the men were shot as they drank tea at a checkpoint in the village of Shin Kalay where they had been living. They had been advising Afghan policemen.

The shootings constituted the greatest number of British soldiers killed in a single incident since the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The U.K.'s death toll in Afghanistan currently stands at 229.



Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown told Parliament members the day after the killings that "while we are assembling evidence, the Taliban has claimed responsibility for this incident," suggesting that the militant group may have infiltrated the Afghan national police force.

A report from China's Xinhua news service on November 5 cited media reports that British and Afghan commanders have started an urgent investigation into the killing of the soldiers because of concerns that the Taliban may have infiltrated local police forces.

On that same day, the British *Guardian* cited sources close to the Afghan security forces who reported that the gunman who killed the soldiers was now back with Taliban militants who greeted him with flowers. The sources identified the killer as a policeman called Gulbadin who had joined the Afghan police force three years ago after undergoing police training in the city of Kandahar.

The report also cited tribal elders who said after the killings that they were aware that Gulbadin had Taliban connections.

The BBC reported that Labour MP Paul Flynn said the U.K.'s strategy was "wholly mistaken," as the Afghan police were "endemically corrupt" and "mercenary." "We cannot succeed in Afghanistan and we must stop now sending our young men to die in vain," said Flynn.

Another Labour Party member, former Defense Minister Peter Kilfoyle told the *Daily Mail* that the latest deaths meant "it is time we should bring our troops home from what is an impossible task."

An AP report quoted U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, who addressed reporters in London on November 5. Napolitano offered condolences to Britain on behalf of President Obama and said the President was weighing the security threat posed by al-Qaeda in Afghanistan against the difficulties presented by carrying on the war there.

"The connection between Afghanistan and our own homeland security is one of the key factors the President is weighing in making the decision about what to do next," said Napolitano. "What is the connection between Afghanistan abroad and the security of Americans at home and the security of our allies, such as the U.K.? He has to weigh that against what commitment of resources is necessary."



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In the aftermath of the attacks against the British soldiers, Bloomberg news for November 5 ran an interview with former British Captain Doug Beattie who asserted that the Afghan police force has been infiltrated “at every level” by the Taliban. “The policemen are influenced either ideologically or financially,” said Beattie. “They are not Taliban sleeper cells. They are radicalized once they are in the job.”

The report also cited a UN announcement made the same day stating that the world body will move about 600 of its international staff members in Afghanistan following an October 28 Taliban attack in a Kabul guesthouse that killed five UN workers. Those Taliban militants were dressed as policemen. The UN said that some of the non-essential staff will be relocated, while others will leave the country.

Speaking at London’s International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) on October 1, U.S. Army General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, outlined what his forces must do differently to contain the Taliban insurgency: “We must gain the initiative by reversing the perceived momentum of the insurgents. *We must seek rapid growth of Afghan national security forces, and that is the army and the police*, and we must improve their effectiveness and our own through closer partnering, and this means we must plan together, live together, operate together and take advantage of each other’s strengths as we move forward.” (Emphasis added.)

If helping the growth of Afghan security forces — a substantial component of which includes the nation’s Taliban-infiltrated police — is a key component of General McChrystal’s strategy for transforming Afghanistan into a stable nation free from Taliban and al-Qaeda influence, perhaps he and his Commander-in-chief should reevaluate his strategy.

We suggest considering the viewpoints of two legislators, British MP Paul Flynn (quoted above) and U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, who said in his *Texas Straight Talk* column of October 13 titled “[Saving Face in Afghanistan](#)”:

It is no coincidence that the more troops we send the worse things get. Things are getting worse precisely because we are sending more troops and escalating the violence. We are hoping that good leadership wins out in Afghanistan, but the pool of potential honest leaders from which to draw have been fleeing the violence, leaving a tremendous power vacuum behind. War does not quell bad leaders. It creates them. And the more war we visit on this country, the more bad leaders we will inadvertently create.

The time for Americans to listen to reason rather than rhetoric about "fighting terrorism" concerning the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is long past due.

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