

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نپاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.businessinsider.com/chinese-army-afghanistan-2017-3>

Chinese troops are reportedly operating in Afghanistan, but it's unclear why

Ryan Pickrell

3/5/2017

Chinese troops are reportedly operating in Afghanistan, but it is unclear what they're doing there.

There is evidence that China has security forces operating inside eastern Afghanistan, and the Pentagon is reportedly very aware of their presence. "We know that they are there, that they are present," a Pentagon spokesman revealed to Military Times, without going into specifics.

Late last year, India's Wion News Agency released photos of suspected Chinese military vehicles in Little Pamir. Franz J. Marty at the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute claimed in February that "overwhelming evidence," including "photographs, an eyewitness account and several confirming statements of diplomats and observers, among them a Chinese official familiar with the matter," indicated the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is conducting joint drills in Afghanistan.

The governments of Afghanistan and China have both denied reports of joint patrols. Towards the end of last month, China conceded that security forces have been conducting counter-terrorism operations along the shared border. Ren Guoqiang, a PLA spokesman, intimated that "the law enforcement authorities of the two sides have conducted joint law enforcement

operations in border areas to fight against terrorism," adding that, "Reports in foreign media of Chinese military vehicles patrolling inside Afghanistan do not accord with the facts."

Ren also denied that there were non-military patrols being carried out in Afghanistan, further adding to the mystery of exactly what China is doing in the region.

Although Beijing denies engaging in military operations in Afghanistan, there was a strange, albeit unconfirmed, Chinese media report claiming Chinese soldiers in Afghanistan rescued US special forces. While the story is likely untrue, it suggests that there may be more to Chinese activities in Afghanistan than meets the eye.

China has made its counter-terrorism concerns, particularly in Afghanistan, known numerous times. The Asian powerhouse is worried that increasing instability in Afghanistan will stir unrest in Xinjiang Province, which is home to the Uighurs, a Muslim minority which maintains a rocky relationship with the Chinese government. Beijing fears that Afghanistan will become a base of operations for militant Uighur separatists, specifically the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM).

China has been working with Afghanistan on countering this threat for several years now.

Afghanistan assured China in 2014 that "it would never allow the ETIM to take advantage of the Afghan territory to engage in activities endangering China, and will continuously deepen security cooperation with the Chinese side." China agreed to "continue to offer training and material assistance to Afghan military and police" to "strengthen cooperation in aspects such as anti-terrorism, the fight against the East Turkistan Islamic Movement and transnational crimes." The following year, Afghanistan turned several captured Uighur militants over to Beijing. China provided tens of millions of dollars to support Afghanistan's security forces.

In recent weeks, Beijing has been putting increased pressure on Uighur militants at home. Last Monday, around 10,000 Chinese troops marched on Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, in a massive show of force against terrorism. That same day, Uighur militants fighting with the Islamic State threatened to return to China and "shed blood like rivers," giving China a reason to step up its involvement regional counter-terrorism activities.

Furthermore, the withdrawal of coalition forces has created an eroding security situation in Afghanistan which could facilitate the rise of dangerous militant groups along China's western border.

Beyond security concerns, China also has significant commercial interests in the war-torn region. China's massive Silk Road Economic Belt will span parts of Central Asia and the Middle East, possibly including Afghanistan.

China has motive for increased involvement, but it is unclear what China is doing in Afghanistan. China may have soldiers, armed police, security personnel, or some combination of the three in the area. Beijing has, so far, not been particularly forthcoming about its activities and intentions in Afghanistan.

Some observers suggest that Chinese involvement in Afghanistan might actually be beneficial for both the US and China, arguing that China might be considering taking on a greater security role in the region after the US and its allies withdraw; however, Chinese troops are unlikely to push far beyond the shared border as long as the US coalition forces maintain a presence in Afghanistan.

There is also the possibility that China is training its military under the guise of counter-terrorism operations, just as it has used peacekeeping and anti-piracy missions to enhance the capabilities of its armed Forces in the past.