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<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/07/10/investigation-alleged-killing-special-forces-afghanistan>

Investigation into alleged killing by special forces in Afghanistan

An Afghan boy was collecting figs when he was shot in the chest and legs by Australian troops, according to an investigative report by the ABC.

7/10/2017

A secret defence inquiry is examining the conduct of Australian special forces in Afghanistan and the alleged killing of at least two children by Australian troops, according to a special report by the ABC.

Australian special forces soldiers were reportedly moving through a remote area when they allegedly shot a young boy dead in Kandahar Province in 2012.

The source the ABC spoke to alleges the killing was never reported up the official chain of command, with the boy's body recovered by local villagers and retrieved by his family.

In a statement, an AFP spokesperson confirmed the matter had been referred to the ADF for investigation.

"On 2 September 2016 the Chief of Army Australia Defence Force (ADF) referred a matter to the AFP relating to an allegation of an unlawful killing by the ADF in Afghanistan in 2012," the statement said.

"The AFP is undertaking an evaluation of the matter referred, and as such it would not be appropriate to comment further."

Australia's record in Afghanistan

In April 2006, Chief of Army Lieutenant-General Angus Campbell said the slew of disturbing stories about the conduct of Australia's elite special forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere would be examined by an independent investigator.

He said a "range of unsubstantiated, third-person, hearsay stories" warranted "deeper consideration, but independently".

In May 2016, the Defence department revealed that three soldiers were charged over the death of six Afghans because they allegedly threw a grenade into a room they knew contained women and children.

A Defence ministerial submission, released under Freedom of Information, said the soldiers believed they were under insurgent fire but evidence indicated it was an Afghan national defending his home and family from attack in the middle of the night in February, 2009.

But charges of manslaughter against the three special forces personnel were dismissed on the grounds that soldiers had no legal duty of care to civilians during combat.

Defence has also denied Australian involvement in an incident in Oruzgan province in 2006 in which a taxi was mistakenly fired upon, killing an Afghan civilian man, blinding a woman and seriously injuring a girl.

In May 2013, then Defence Minister Stephen Smith rejected concerns raised by Sydney-based advocacy group the Public Interest Advocacy Centre over allegations that Australian forces in Afghanistan mistreated Afghan detainees in their custody.

The allegations were put forward by Afghan detainees captured by the Australian Defence Force and held at a United States military prison near Bagram air base.

Meanwhile Australia has committed an extra 30 troops to Afghanistan, taking its deployment to 300 Australian Defence Force personnel.

The ADF's presence in Afghanistan is due to expire in 2018, but Defence Minister Marise Payne says it is under constant review.

The Australian commitment to Afghanistan is known as Operation Highroad, which replaced combat operations in 2014.

Since Australian troops were first sent to Afghanistan in 2001, 42 troops have died.