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## The Afghanistan Report the Pentagon Doesn't Want You to Read

By Michael Hastings

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US soldiers at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Kuschamond in Afghanistan in 2011. AFP

Earlier this week, the New York Times' Scott Shane published a bombshell piece about Lt. Colonel Daniel Davis, a 17-year Army veteran recently returned from a second tour in Afghanistan. According to the Times, the 48-year-old Davis had written an 84-page unclassified report, as well as a classified report, offering his assessment of the decade-long war. That assessment is essentially that the war has been a disaster and the military's top brass has not leveled with the American public about just how badly it's been going. "How many more men must die in support of a mission that is not succeeding?" Davis boldly asks in an article summarizing his views in The Armed Forces Journal.

Davis last month submitted the unclassified report –titled "Dereliction of Duty II: Senior Military Leader's Loss of Integrity Wounds Afghan War Effort" – for an internal Army review. Such a report could then be released to the public. However, according to U.S. military officials familiar with the situation, the Pentagon is refusing to do so. Rolling Stone has now obtained a full copy of the 84-page unclassified version, which has been making the rounds within the U.S. government, including the White House. We've decided to publish it in full; it's well worth reading for yourself. It is, in my estimation, one of the most significant documents published by an active-duty officer in the past ten years.

Here is the report's damning opening lines: "Senior ranking U.S. military leaders have so distorted the truth when communicating with the U.S. Congress and American people in regards to conditions on the ground in Afghanistan that the truth has become unrecognizable. This deception has damaged America's credibility among both our allies and enemies, severely limiting our ability to reach a political solution to the war in Afghanistan." Davis goes on to explain that everything in the report is "open source" – i.e., unclassified – information. According to Davis, the classified report, which he legally submitted to Congress, is even more devastating. "If the public had access to these classified reports they would see the dramatic gulf between what is often said in public by our senior leaders and what is actually true behind the scenes," Davis writes. "It would be illegal for me to discuss, use, or cite classified material in an open venue and thus I will not do so; I am no WikiLeaks guy Part II."

According to the Times story, Davis briefed four members of Congress and a dozen staff members and sent his reports to the Defense Department's inspector general, and of course spoke to a New York Times reporter; only after all that did he inform his chain of command what he'd been up to. Evidently Davis's truth-telling campaign has rattled the Pentagon brass, prompting unnamed officials to retaliate by threatening a bogus investigation for "possible security violations," according to NBC News.

Although Davis's critics have tried to brush off his claims as merely the opinions of a "reservist," – as Max Boot put it – his report is full of insight, analysis, and hard data that back up each one of his claims. He details the gross failure of training the Afghan Army, the military's blurring of the lines between public affairs and "information operations" (meaning, essentially, propaganda), and the Pentagon's manipulation of the U.S. media. (He expertly contrasts senior military officials public statements with the actual reality on the ground.) Davis concludes: "It is my recommendation that the United States Congress – the House and Senate Armed Services Committees in particular – should conduct a bi-partisan investigation into the various charges of deception or dishonesty in this report and hold broad hearings as well," he writes. "These

hearings need to include the very senior generals and former generals whom I refer to in this report so they can be given every chance to publicly give their version of events." In other words, put the generals under oath, and then see what story they tell.

Michael Hastings is a contributing editor to Rolling Stone and author of *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan*.