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<http://news.antiwar.com/2013/02/19/despite-annual-drop-afghan-civilian-deaths-on-the-rise/print/>

## Despite Annual Drop, Afghan Civilian Deaths on the Rise

By Jason Ditz

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The overall death toll among Afghan civilians dropped slightly in 2012, to 2,754 killed nationwide and 4,805 wounded. This does not suggest a trend toward calm, however, as a closer examination of the figures shows that the “calm” such as it was already came and went.

The “calm period” for the Afghan war appears to have taken place between late 2011 and early 2012, ending around the start of summer of last year. Since then, deaths have been significantly rising once again, with a 20 percent spike between the second half of 2011 and the second half of 2012.

The UN report detailing the death toll also showed an alarming increase in the number of US and NATO drone strikes against Afghanistan, as well as a dramatic rise in the number of civilians killed in those strikes.

Though drones remain a relatively small-scale killer of Afghan civilians compared to manned air strikes, night raids and IEDs, drone use in the war zone has been trending upward every year since President Obama took office, and nearly doubled in 2012. The eagerness to escalate the drone program points at this toll being set to explode in coming years.

The UN attributed the annual drop to a decline in the number of suicide attacks in the first half of the year, as well as the unusually harsh and long winter which kept much of the insurgency stuck indoors.

Attacks by insurgents seemed to get more accurate as well, for while they killed somewhat fewer civilians, deaths among government employees rose by a factor of ten, from 108 to 1,077.