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## New revelations of torture and murder of Afghan civilians by US Special Forces

By Thomas Gaist

15 May 2013

Zakaria Kandahari, a member of a US Special Forces “A Team,” has been accused by Afghan officials of carrying out and directing the torture of 15 civilians detained in recent raids in Warduk province. Afghan officials say Kandahari is an American of Afghan descent and a leader of the Special Forces unit.

Of the 15 prisoners, seven are confirmed dead, with the other eight missing. The body of one of the prisoners, Mohammad Qassim, was found dumped in a trash pit outside a US installation shortly after the detentions.

US forces have long conducted bloody counter-insurgency operations in the province, just west of Kabul, prompting repeated accusations by local villagers that they torture and murder civilians. In February, responding to popular outrage, President Hamid Karzai demanded Special Forces cease operations in province.

The latest accusations are based on a video recording of Kandahari conducting a torture session on Afghan civilian Sayid Mohammad. Afghan officials have said a voice can be heard in the background of the recording speaking American English while Kandahari tortures Mohammad. Kandahari, who speaks fluent English with an American accent, was working closely with US special forces to carry out missions.

Testimony from one of the victims has also implicated Kandahari. Hikmatullah, a 16-year-old Afghan student, says he was tortured by Kandahari, who he identified by the large sword tattoo on his upper right arm.

According to Hikmatullah, Kandahari beat him savagely, dislocating his shoulder after the student denied any connections with the anti-occupation insurgency. Hikmatullah's two brothers, Sadiqullah and Ismatullah, who were also captured by the A Team, are still missing.

US General John Allen promised to hand Kandahari over to Afghan authorities for questioning within 24 hours, yet the next day the US command announced he had escaped and was nowhere to be found.

Predictably, the occupation authorities have denied involvement in the incident. "After thorough investigation, there was no credible evidence to substantiate misconduct by U.S. or ISAF forces relating to the detainees or deaths in Nerkh," the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO's military command in Afghanistan, asserted in a statement. ISAF representatives have asserted the roundups were carried out by Afghan forces, without collaboration by occupation forces.

Attempts to shift blame for the incident onto the Afghans are patently absurd given the long and continuing use of such methods by ISAF and especially US Special Forces.

US military forces in Afghanistan have established a network of black sites, where suspected insurgents can be taken at any time, including the notorious Bagram airbase. The US Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) has authorization to hold suspected insurgents in these detention facilities for up to nine weeks without any pretense of legal charges, at which point a waiver from the Pentagon suffices to detain the prisoners indefinitely.

Daphne Eviatar of Human Rights First's described the conditions inside these JSOC black sites, stating that inmates are "forced to strip naked, then kept in solitary confinement in windowless, often cold cells with lights on 24 hours a day."

These methods have been employed in an unsuccessful effort to crush the fierce resistance to the occupation and puppet regime in Kabul.

Three US soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb in Kandahar province on Tuesday. On Monday, three Georgian soldiers were also killed in Helmand. Also on Monday, a suicide bomber attacked a US Special Operations convoy. An earlier blast on May 1 killed three British soldiers.

Local villagers have registered numerous complaints of torture and abuse at the hands of US commandos in recent months, which have been ignored by the NATO leadership. Hundreds of families in Warduk province have fled their homes as a result of the frequent raids.

The use of such methods, far from being an aberration, flows from the logic of the US occupation itself. Facing intractable popular resistance, the US-led forces respond with the same murderous tactics used in countless “dirty wars,” in Algeria, in Vietnam, in Central America, and in Iraq. Death squads are deployed, torture becomes standard operating procedure, and civilians are rounded up indiscriminately.

With the much-heralded “drawdown” of imperialist forces from Afghanistan scheduled to occur during 2014, the US has relied even more heavily on these methods of unbridled terror to subjugate the population and maintain control.

Whatever drawdown is carried out will largely be a redeployment of military assets in preparation for new wars against Syria, Iran, and other countries.

At the same time, the US plans to maintain nine permanent bases in Afghanistan, with a residual force of 10,000-20,000. This will be complimented by stepped up terror by Special Forces death squads and the deployment of drones, which can remotely kill anti-occupation forces from thousands of miles away.

Lt. General Nick Carter of the British military told *The Atlantic* that occupation forces will need to play a significant role in Afghanistan at least through 2018, aiding the Afghan national forces in numerous capacities. Carter admitted, even after four more years of combat operations, the situation on the ground will continue to be characterized by high levels of disorder and violence.

According to the *National Journal's* article “NATO’s Plan for Afghanistan Post-2014: A ‘Stable Instability,’” Carter views such an outcome as “not necessarily a disaster for ISAF.” In fact, such a situation is welcomed by imperialist policy makers, who hope to take advantage of the social catastrophe to implement the strategy of divide and rule in Afghanistan, and prevent the consolidation of anti-US forces.

In Carter's scenario for “stable instability”—something General David Petraeus previously dubbed “Afghan Good Enough”—the occupation will maintain a minimum of security around US military installations, while carrying out counter-insurgency operations in the hinterland when deemed necessary. Territory outside the major cities will remain under the control of local warlords.