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Between Casualties and Desertion, Afghan Military Shrinking Fast

By Jason Ditz

March 3, 2015



Afghanistan's National Army (ANA) has long struggled with making its recruitment numbers match its desertions. As their role in combat escalates, a newly declassified Pentagon report shows they're losing ground.

The latest report showed troop totals fell from February of 2014 through November by about 8.5%, cutting over 15,000 troops from the bottom line figure over the 10 month span.

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The desertion problem is a long-standing one, with many Afghans signing up for the military, sticking around long enough to get their first paycheck, then bailing, and often taking their weapon with them as a sort of severance package.

As casualties among Afghan forces rise, the urge to desert grows all the stronger, and with the Afghan military already recruiting as hard as they possibly can in a nation of about 30,000,000 people, they're just not able to keep up anymore.

This presents a secondary problem as Afghan forces try to prove themselves against the Taliban, as even if they manage to show that they can sort of hold their own now, a shrinking force means capabilities will likely be decreasing over time.