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## NATO Kills Three Afghan Police in Air Strike

By Jason Ditz

January 10, 2011

A NATO air strike in Daykundi Province [has left at least three members of Afghanistan's police force dead and three others wounded](#), in what Afghan officials are calling a “friendly fire” incident and NATO is saying was a routine attack on “armed individuals.”

The attack is just the latest in a growing number of friendly fire incidents and civilian killings, as Gen. David Petraeus massively increases the number of air strikes in Afghanistan and pares back restrictions designed to identify the targets before the strike.

In this case, the “armed individuals” were all members of the local police force, and were on their way to meet up with the US Special Forces in the area for joint patrols. Upon spotting them, the NATO helicopters swept in and attacked them.

NATO spokesman Col. Rafael Torres insisted NATO continues to “take extraordinary precautions” in its air strikes to avoid such killings, but the sheer volume of such incidents in recent months suggests otherwise. It also suggests another reason why local police forces have such a hard time recruiting – the poorly paid positions are simply too dangerous and being on patrol, in uniform or not, makes them a target for both insurgents and allied aircraft.