



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 2, 2010

## Families Grieve as Six U.S. Soldiers' Bodies Return From Afghanistan

As the death toll among U.S. service members in Afghanistan continues to mount — 2010 is the deadliest year of the war thus far — President Barack Obama may regret his administration's decision, correct though it was, to permit the media to cover the return of dead soldiers' remains to Dover Air Force Base. Scenes such as this one reported by the Associated Press may become all too common: "Several of President Barack Obama's top national security advisers stood on a silent, windy tarmac Wednesday night to watch as the bodies of six U.S. soldiers killed by a rogue Afghan policeman returned to U.S. soil."



The soldiers were killed during a November 29 training mission for Afghan security forces near Pakistan when the border policeman, who had been on the force for two years, opened fire on his erstwhile colleagues from the United States. The shooter was shot to death in return.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, issuing a statement saying the rogue cop "joined the police force of stooge regime in pursuit of an opportunity to eliminate any number of U.S.-NATO invaders until he got one today." Though it does not justify the attack, it undoubtedly represents to some degree the views of many Afghans, who, contrary to the received wisdom here in America, do not much appreciate being invaded and placed under what they consider a puppet government, even when the invader and presumed puppeteer loudly proclaims his pure motives.

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This shooting was hardly an isolated incident. In fact, [as the New York Times explains](#), "it was at least the fifth time in 13 months that Afghan soldiers or police officers have turned their weapons on their NATO partners. Most of the previous cases appeared to involve Taliban infiltrators, although it is often impossible to verify the group's claims of responsibility."

It's not difficult to figure out how these moles get into U.S.-led security forces despite the allegedly rigorous vetting process for new recruits that U.S. and Afghan officials [described to the Washington Post](#). The U.S. government can't even [keep people with criminal records](#) out of the Transportation Security Administration here at home. How can it possibly be expected to determine who is friend or foe in a hostile, non-English-speaking country on the other side of the globe?

More on the scene at Dover from the AP:

The only sound during the "dignified transfer" was of the wind blowing through the 747 jet engines as the flag-topped caskets, called transfer cases, were lowered to the ground. Teams of



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white-gloved pallbearers carried each casket to a waiting truck. Fathers, mothers, wives and other family of five of the soldiers traveled to Dover for Wednesday's return....

The soldiers' bodies were flown together from Germany to Dover Air Force Base, where they will be formally identified at an Air Force mortuary. Within days the dead will be returned to their families for burial.

The *Post* writes that "the training mission has become the clearest path to an exit from combat in Afghanistan for international forces" by 2014. With attacks during training missions on the rise, the feasibility of that timetable is called into serious question.

But the longer troops remain in Afghanistan, the more such scenes of grief are to be expected. The only certain way to prevent them is to bring the troops home immediately from their futile mission — a mission that has now lasted longer than, and been about as successful as, the Soviet Union's attempt to bring Afghanistan to heel in the 1980s. Better to get out now than to cause even one more family to grieve over yet another soldier who has died in a vain attempt to subdue the "graveyard of empires."



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