



Written by on January 13, 2010

## Taliban Incite Violent Afghanistan Protest

The town of Garmsir in southern Afghanistan exploded in violent protest on January 12, fueled by rumors spread by the Taliban that members of the U.S. military had desecrated a Koran and defiled local women in a nearby village two nights before.

The *New York Times* cited local officials who said that Taliban provocateurs had stirred up and incited to violence a crowd of several thousand Afghans who had gathered in the central bazaar in Garmsir. When the riot was over, at least eight protesters were dead and approximately a dozen were wounded by gunfire from Afghan intelligence officers.



The officials said the protest was organized by the Taliban's shadow governor for Garmsir, Mullah Mohammed Naim.

"The Taliban were provoking the people," Kamal Khan, Helmand Province's deputy police chief, said in a telephone interview with the *Times*. "They were telling the people that the Americans and their Afghan partners are killing innocent people, bombing their homes and destroying their mosques and also blaspheming their religion and culture. The Taliban were telling the people, 'This is jihad; you should sacrifice yourselves.' "

Khan, himself, was a target of the protestors' outrage, as they shouted: "Death to America" and "Death to Kamal Khan." The mob overturned several cars, set a school on fire, and then stormed the local office of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security.

Gamsir was controlled by the Taliban until it was wrested from their control during the [Battle of Garmsir](#), which began in April 2008, when a battalion of U.S. Marines under the command of Col. Peter Petronzio went to the town. After liberating the town from Taliban control, the Marines' role changed as they went from combat operations to civil operations, basically becoming policemen.

A report carried by Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, quoted from a press release issued by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that read: "While denying these allegations [of killing civilians in Garsir], we take them very seriously and support a combined investigation with local Afghan authorities."

The release also noted the killing of a sniper: "During today's protest, an insurgent sniper shot an Afghan official in Garmsir District. ISAF service members identified the insurgent sniper, shot and killed him."

The Garmsir rioting and other similar incidents serve to underscore the impossible situation in which U.S. and other ISAF forces have become enmeshed. These forces have been sent into Afghanistan, at a tremendous cost in both blood and money, for the supposed purpose of preventing the Taliban from taking control of the country and once again providing a safe sanctuary for al Qaeda terrorists — as they did in pre-9/11 days. All we need to do, according to this line of reasoning, is keep upping the ante



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in troop numbers until the Taliban eventually cry “Uncle.”

What those who are advancing this strategy fail to realize (or at least fail to mention) is that our troop presence in the Muslim world only leads to incidents such as this one in Gamsir, where even if U.S. troops are innocent, most of the civilian population believes they must be guilty of something.

As Rep. Ron Paul wrote in his Texas Straight Talk column for October 13, 2009 entitled “[Saving Face in Afghanistan](#)”:

Why does it now seem that the more troops we send, the worse things get?...

The truth is it is no coincidence that the more troops we send the worse things get. Things are getting worse precisely because we are sending more troops and escalating the violence. We are hoping that good leadership wins out in Afghanistan, but the pool of potential honest leaders from which to draw have been fleeing the violence, leaving a tremendous power vacuum behind. War does not quell bad leaders. It creates them. And the more war we visit on this country, the more bad leaders we will inadvertently create.

Another thing that war does is create anger with its indiscriminate violence and injustice. How many innocent civilians have been harmed from clumsy bombings and mistakes that end up costing lives? People die from simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time in a war zone, but the killers never face consequences....

The real question is why are we there at all? What do our efforts now have to do with the original authorization of the use of force? We are no longer dealing with anything or anyone involved in the attacks of 9/11. At this point we are only strengthening the resolve and the ranks of our enemies. We have nothing left to win. We are only there to save face, and in the end we will not even be able to do that.

*Photo: AP Images*



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