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[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

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J. Ditz

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## US Touts Escalation, but ISIS in Afghanistan Far From Defeated

US officials [bragged of 1,400 distinct operations against ISIS in Afghanistan, killing 1,600 of them](#), and insist there is no sign they are recruiting any new fighters. The Afghan government has claimed on at least three separate occasions that ISIS in Nangarhar Province has been totally wiped out.

Which is leading to a lot o questions at year's end, as despite all these glowing reports, ISIS appears no closer to defeat in the region than ever, nor are all these deaths apparently reducing their ability to fight.

Some of this has been well

documented in the past, with ISIS in Nangarhar very efficiently relocating out of targeted areas, then quickly returning as soon as the Afghan military declares victory. The claimed death tolls are likely far exaggerated.

But now concerns are also being raised as to whether the US is buying its own hype, and totally misunderstands the ISIS role in Afghanistan. Given how often the US has downplayed the group as operationally irrelevant, that may be the case.

But they may not be the only one. On top of the Afghan military declaring victory over and over, the Taliban has also downplayed the role ISIS would ever play in the country,



and kept doing so until ISIS got so powerful it started to overrun some Taliban districts with insufficient defense.

Though Afghan ISIS does indeed recruit breakaway Taliban fighters, they've also got connections with the ISIS parent organization, and knowledge gleaned from the fighting in Iraq and Syria, where they've proven to be very difficult to eradicate.