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Report: NATO's Claims of 'Afghan-Led' Missions Mostly Nonsense

By Jason Ditz

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The latest fad in 11 years of branding for the Afghan War is, for those reading NATO press releases, the phrase “Afghan-led.” Virtually every mission is termed “Afghan-led,” and includes explicit praise of the Afghan troops involved.

As with so many other labels, the term is deliberately misleading, according to a new report from Afghan Analysts Network, and [is attached to operations even when Afghan forces were not present or played virtually no role in the conflict.](#)

The report centers on the murder of Omaid Khpulwak, an Afghan journalist who survived a suicide attack on a broadcast station but was executed by a US soldier who assumed he was an “insurgent.” This operation too was termed “Afghan-led.”

But NATO's narrative is muddled, bordering on the bizarre, as it claims that Afghan forces responded “unilaterally” to the attack, and were overseeing the response. The reality is that the NATO troops were not operating under Afghan command, and no Afghan troops were present in the raid on the building.

Indeed, the entire justification for terming it Afghan-led, a branding [which the US defended after the fact, was that a separate group of Afghan troops just happened](#) to be fighting the Taliban at the governor's compound on the other side of the same city.

Branding an operation Afghan-led is important for NATO on two fronts, as it both gives them someone to shift the blame to when things go wrong, and allows them to keep pushing the false narrative that the Afghan government is “taking control” of the seemingly endless war.