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## Pro-Govt. Militia Kills 16 Civilians in Northern Afghanistan

By Jason Ditz

September 2, 2012

Villagers from the tiny Kanam Village in Afghanistan's Kunduz Province marched on the provincial capital today, protesting an overnight attack by the US-backed Arbaki Militia, which killed 16 civilians.

The Arbakis attacked the village overnight, firing randomly and telling locals that they were taking revenge for a Taliban attack near the village which led to the assassination of one of their members. Officials say the death toll is likely to rise further, as many others were gravely wounded.

The provincial police initially sought to shrug off the incident, claiming only that it was carried out by "irresponsible armed men." Later the provincial governor admitted it was the Arbaki militia.

The Arbakis got their start as private tribal militias/gangs relying on intimidation to extort money from locals. They were quickly embraced by the US, which renamed them the Afghan Local Police and started funneling money and weapons to the groups in return for promises to support the government and fight the Taliban. Though the groups have clashed regularly with the Taliban, their increased power has also made them a major problem for civilians, as they remain virtually above the law.