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## Obama's Secret Prisons

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With the dawn of the Obama era, there has been much discussion of counterinsurgency, or COIN. Far less discussed, or reported on, has been [the counterterror war](#) in Afghanistan which is evidently [ramping up](#). The truth of counterinsurgency (though you'll seldom see it said) is that, as a strategy, it has no chance unless its underpinning is a robust program of counterterror.

You don't know what counterterror is? Not so surprising. The truth is, if you're not a complete news jockey, you probably don't know much about targeted assassinations, night raids, secret detention centers, disappearances, and other acts of *counterterror* (which is really terror in uniform or at least under state orders). Of course, the Afghans know well enough. For them, it's not a secret war, particularly in the southern parts of the country, where the Taliban is strongest; it's but one particularly frightening aspect of everyday life.

It's just we Americans who are ignorant. Our secret war is essentially kept secret from us. Our Special Forces operatives, along with the CIA (and possibly private contractors), have long been involved in the "night raids" that Anand Gopal describes below. And regularly enough, if you're reading closely, you'll see news bubbling to the surface about their results — like those eight students [in grades 6-10](#), who were taken from their beds by "Americans" in a night raid in Kunar Province, handcuffed, and then evidently executed. (A statement from Afghan President Hamid Karzai says that they were "[martyred](#)" and the UN has [confirmed](#) that they were students.) Or consider the

recent night raid [in Ghazni Province](#) that killed at least four Afghan villagers, including an 11-year-old. Both incidents led to angry protests; both resulted in denials by the U.S. military that the dead were anything but "insurgents" or "bomb-makers."

In this country, the night raids and the secret U.S. military detention centers that go with them have received next to no coverage — until now. I'm proud to say that [Anand Gopal](#), who has been reporting for the *Wall Street Journal* from Kabul, produces here the single most extensive report so far on American night raids in Afghanistan and the military holding areas that are the "[black sites](#)" of this moment. (His investigation, a shared project of TomDispatch.com and the [Nation magazine](#), appears in print in the latest issue of the *Nation*. To catch him in an audio interview with TomDispatch's Timothy MacBain discussing how he got this story, click [here](#).)

Even if inherited from the Bush administration, the Afghan night raids, the accompanying killings, disappearances, incarcerations, and abuses, as well as the secret military detention centers are now, after a full year in office, Obama's.