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Data Shows Afghan Troops Deserting at Growing Rates

By Jason Ditz

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The latest data from NATO is showing that the rate of desertion in the Afghan military, already enormous by any standard, has actually grown significantly in the past year, [with nearly 25,000 soldiers, about 1/7 of the overall force, deserting just in the past six months.](#)

The 24,590 deserters is more than double the 11,423 in the same period last year, and the figure tends to grow later in the summer, as the nation's agricultural hubs near harvest season. [In 2009 the Afghan military lost almost 1/4 of its troops by the harvest season's beginning.](#)

Desertion has been high since the beginning of the NATO occupation, with large numbers of troops abandoning their posts in the face of low pay, dangerous conditions, [and an endless war with Taliban forces which have heavily infiltrated the security forces.](#)

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Karimi complained that much of the attrition was because deserters are not punished for leaving their posts, though it is likely this will do major damage to their ability to recruit foot soldiers, which many in the nation see as a temp job.