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## US Continues to Escalate Air Strikes in Afghanistan

By Jason Ditz

November 30, 2010

Following [angry rebukes of President Hamid Karzai's call](#) to make the war less disruptive to civilians, the Obama Administration is said to be [further escalating its air war](#) in Afghanistan, and officials are confirming a “loosening of the reins” of the restrictions on air strikes.

Officials warned that the McChrystal rules, aimed at reducing civilian deaths, meant “[some officers were exerting excessive caution, fearing career damage if civilians were mistakenly killed.](#)” With Petraeus now in charge, concerns about killing civilians have faded.

Officials also repeated claims that the civilian death toll had dropped, despite [the Pentagon having released figures only weeks ago showing that they were actually killing considerably more civilians than in 2009.](#)

Civilian deaths have been a serious concern for the local population in [Sangin District recently as well, though US officials have declined to even investigate the reports of troops killing civilians, saying they are assumed to be Taliban tricks.](#) This suggests the official data, even if it points to an increase, is likely a considerable undercount, as a number of commanders won't even consider evidence of a civilian death.