



The follow-up investigation of a botched Special Operations Forces (SOF) raid in Gardez Feb. 12 that killed two government officials and three women, ordered by Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal Apr. 5, was ostensibly aimed at reconciling divergent Afghan and U.S. accounts of what happened during and after the raid.

That implied that the U.S. investigators would finally do what they had failed to do in the original investigation - interview the eyewitnesses. But three eyewitnesses who had claimed to see U.S. troops digging bullets of the bodies of three women told IPS they were never contacted by U.S. investigators.

The failure to interview key eyewitnesses, along with the refusal to make public any of the investigation's findings, continued a pattern of behaviour by McChrystal's command of denying that the SOF unit had begun a cover-up of the killings immediately after the raid.

Both the original report of the U.S. investigation and initial NATO report on the Feb. 12 night raid in Gardez remain classified, according to Lt. Col. Todd Breasseale, the officer who was spokesman for McChrystal on the issue before the general was relieved of his command Jun. 23.

Casting further doubt on the integrity of the investigation, the officer who carried out the follow-up investigation was under McChrystal's direct command after completing the investigation.

As a member of the SOF community who had promoted night raids as a privileged tactic in his strategy in Afghanistan, McChrystal had an obvious personal and political interest in keeping evidence of an SOF cover-up of the killings out of any official U.S. report on the Gardez raid.

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