



"Tied up, gagged and killed" was how NATO described the "gruesome discovery" of three women's bodies during a night raid in eastern Afghanistan in which several alleged militants were shot dead on Feb. 12.

Hours later they revised the number of women "bound and gagged" to two and announced an enquiry. For more than a month they said nothing more on the matter.

The implication was clear: The dead militants were probably also guilty of the cold-blooded slaughter of helpless women prisoners. NATO said their intelligence had "confirmed militant activity". As if to reinforce the point, coalition spokesman Brigadier General Eric Tremblay, a Canadian, talked in that second press release of "criminals and terrorists who do not care about the life of civilians". Only that's not what happened, at all.

The militants weren't militants, they were loyal government officials. The women, according to dozens of interviews with witnesses at the scene, were killed by the raiders. Two of them were pregnant, one was engaged to be married.

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