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Pretty Unreal

by [Joshua Foust](#) on [5/17/2011](#) · [0 comments](#)

Afghan Analyst's Network [goes after the ISAF spin machine](#) over the Takhar airstrike.

ISAF's responses make it clear that they are upholding their original assertion, based on signals intelligence, that Muhammad Amin and Zabet Amanullah were the same person. Its responses also make it clear that they continue to find it unnecessary to cross-check the information with human intelligence (which is reflected in the earlier words of one senior SF officer, 'we were not tracking the names... [but] targeting the telephones').

AAN has however presented detailed biographies of both men, as well as an interview with Muhammad Amin, carried out in Pakistan by Michael Semple of Harvard University (read his [rendering of the story here](#)). Biographical information about Muhammad Amin, given to this author by the Special Forces, was cross-checked with what Amin said about himself and with what two other independent sources said about him. Muhammad Amin is a known individual from Takhar from a recognized family with a history rooted in the province. He was indeed the deputy shadow governor Takhar at the time of the attack. He remains an active Taleban commander.

Semple's story is also worth reading, if only for his discussions of alternatives (in particular trying persuasion). Unfortunately, ISAF isn't interested in alternatives—as my friend Doug Bandow has [wondered](#): ISAF seems determined to kill a lot of Taliban before they begin talks, but what if the Taliban think the same way? At some point, one side has got to give, and no matter how hard you lick General Petraeus' boots, it will eventually be us. We don't live there, and we don't see it as a fight for survival. The Taliban do. It's really that simple.

Fascinating side note: you know who has not, as best I can tell, commented once on this rather shocking story of mistaken identity? [Bill Roggio](#). Which doesn't surprise me, considering the military hasn't yet admitted an error. Roggio will be a bellwether on how the special forces community—which supply him many of his "scoops"—ultimately reacts to Clark's investigative work.

And you, Kate Clark, going up against ISAF's PR industry? Good luck. I mean it.

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