

Afghanistan Air Strikes Up 172 Percent

By [Global Research](#)

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(WASHINGTON) — The number of U.S. and NATO air strikes over Afghanistan has spiked since General David Petraeus replaced General Stanley McCrystal as commander of the war effort in June. U.S. Air Force statistics show a 172 percent increase, with 700 separate missions flown in September. A total of 257 assault missions were flown in September, 2009. Surveillance flights increased to nearly three times the number from September 2009 and supply flights are up as well.

Civilian casualties had led McCrystal to issue restrictive rules of engagement, curtailing the number of airstrikes and, critics say, tying the hands of forces trying to beat back a crafty insurgency best located from above. Petraeus is sometimes seen as more willing to risk the so-called “collateral damage” of civilian deaths but has said publicly that the rules of engagement would not be changed. Experts say the troop surge could be behind part of the intensified airwar, with more boots on the ground calling for more air support.

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