

Number of Afghan Air Strikes Highest Ever

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Remember how last month's air strike numbers raised eyebrows because they had spiked to 700 in the month of September? Well, the Air Force has released October's statistics and continuing with this year's upward trend, the number of airstrikes rose to 1,000 last month. That's the highest single month total ever in the air war in Afghanistan, the previous high had been 984 in June, 2008.

The September percentage increase over the same month a year ago was an eye-popping 172 percent, but this time around the difference between Octobers is 52 percent because there were 660 strikes last October.

The Air Force uses the term weapons releases to describe when US and NATO aircraft drop bombs on enemy targets or use their guns to provide combat support for ground troops.

Overall, the 26,948 combat missions (sorties) this year has already overtaken last year's number of 26,474.

The number of airstrikes began to trend upward earlier this year in May and June when Gen. McChrystal was still in charge of NATO forces in Afghanistan. When he took command the year before, McChrystal had placed restrictions on the use of airstrikes if civilians were nearby. He did this in an effort to turn around negative Afghan public opinion that had soured on NATO because of incidents where airstrikes targeting Taliban targets had also resulted in civilian casualties.

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