

ABC NEWS

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Nazi swastika flag flown on Australian Defence vehicle in Afghanistan

Exclusive by [Dan Oakes](#), ABC Investigations

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Photo: [A Nazi swastika flag flies over an Australian Army vehicle in Afghanistan \(Supplied\)](#)

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A leaked photo shows an Australian Army vehicle flying the Nazi swastika flag while on operation in Afghanistan.

The photo, obtained exclusively by the ABC, was taken in August 2007.

The photograph shows the large swastika emblem hoisted over an Australian military vehicle.

Two separate Defence sources have identified a particular soldier as the individual who took the flag to Afghanistan.



[Photo: The ABC has confirmed the photo was taken in 2007. \(Supplied\)](#)

The ABC has seen a second photograph of the flag, and it is understood that further images of the flag in Afghanistan have also been circulated among Australian soldiers.

One Defence source who was aware of the flag being flown in Afghanistan in 2007 said it was a "twisted joke", rather than evidence or an expression of genuine neo-Nazism.

The source claimed the flag was up for a "prolonged period".

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DEFENCE SAYS FLAG WAS ONLY UP 'BRIEFLY'

In response to questions from the ABC, a Defence spokesperson said: "Defence and the ADF reject as abhorrent everything this flag represents. Neither the flag nor its use are in line with Defence values.

"The flag was briefly raised above an Australian Army vehicle in Afghanistan in 2007.

"The commander took immediate action to have the offensive flag taken down.

"It is totally inappropriate for any ADF vehicle or company to have a flag of this nature.

"The personnel involved were immediately cautioned at the time and subsequently received further counselling.

"Additionally, steps were taken to reinforce education and training for all personnel who witnessed the flag."

CONCERNS ABOUT CULTURE

The photograph has emerged as the actions of Australia's special forces in Afghanistan come under unprecedented scrutiny.

The ABC recently published claims in relation to the [alleged killing of unarmed Afghan men](#) by a different group of Australian special forces personnel during an operation in the village of Darwan, five years later in September 2012.

WHAT HAPPENED IN DARWAN?



[Afghan villagers allege family members were killed by soldiers](#)

The Darwan revelations came after details of an [explosive internal report commissioned](#) by Defence were leaked.

The report, commissioned in 2016 and based on confidential interviews with special forces soldiers, said some of those interviewed felt that the cultural problems had developed because of weak leadership on the part of some special operations commanders who had "disregarded the telltale signs of dysfunction".

Chief of Army Angus Campbell earlier this year appeared to take steps toward culture change, [ordering a ban](#) on soldiers' use of "death-style" imagery, such as Spartan warriors, the grim reaper, skull and crossbones and the "Punisher" vigilante character.

Lieutenant General Campbell said use of such symbols is "always ill-considered and implicitly encourages the inculcation of an arrogant hubris and general disregard for the most serious responsibility of our profession: the legitimate and discriminate taking of life".

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