

# US-led forces kill more Afghan civilians

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US and NATO forces killed at least 13 Afghans over the weekend, adding to the toll of civilian deaths as the military intensifies efforts to crush opposition to the nearly seven-year-old US occupation.

The two latest incidents occurred as Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama visited Afghanistan and called for more US troops to be sent to the war-ravaged country.

On Sunday, US-led coalition forces killed four Afghan police officers and five civilians in the Anar Dara district in the western province of Farah, near the Iranian border. Coalition forces, which entered the area around midnight, waged a four-hour firefight and called in air strikes after reportedly receiving small arms fire from a group of local policemen.

Provincial Deputy Governor Younus Rasuli said the US-led convoy of troops never informed local police or officials of their plans to be in the area, and the policemen mistook them for Taliban fighters.

The US military issued a perfunctory statement justifying the action against what it described as a “non-uniformed hostile force.” Coalition forces, the statement said, had “engaged the enemy with precision close air support.”

In a separate incident Saturday night, NATO forces killed at least four civilians in eastern Paktika province when International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) fired two mortar rounds that landed nearly half a mile short of their target. The Associated Press reported that NATO was investigating whether three other civilians were also killed in the attack, which occurred in the Barmal district, an area made up mostly of Sunni Pashtun people.

The ISAF issued a statement saying it “deeply regrets this accident” and would investigate the incident. The alliance acknowledged it was providing medical aid to four others who were wounded in the attack.

As has been the case in previous such incidents in

which, all told, thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed by US-led forces, military commanders insisted they were taking every precaution to prevent civilian deaths, which they said, were ultimately the fault of the insurgency.

The slaughter of innocent men, women and children, however, is inevitable given the neo-colonial character of the war and the counter-insurgency methods the US and NATO forces are using against growing popular resistance.

The number of attacks launched against the occupation forces has jumped by over 40 percent this summer. For the first time last month, US and allied casualties in Afghanistan surpassed those in Iraq.

In response to the deteriorating military situation, 646 bombs were dropped in June—the second highest total for any month of the war. In the first half of 2008, 1,853 bombs and missiles were used, 40 percent more than the same period last year.

The escalating violence took place as Obama visited Kabul on Sunday. In the morning he met with US troops at Camp Eggers, a heavily fortified military base in the city, praising them for their “excellent work.”

Later, in a meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, he pledged additional military support to the puppet regime. Karzai’s spokesman said Obama was “committed to supporting Afghanistan and to continue the war against terrorism with vigor.” He said Democrats and Republicans “are friends of Afghanistan and no matter who wins the US elections, Afghanistan will have a very strong partner in the United States.”

In an interview from Kabul broadcast by CBS News on Sunday, Obama said the situation in the country was “precarious and urgent” and reiterated his position that Afghanistan had to become the focus of US military action, as opposed to the “strategic mistake” in Iraq that had diverted the US from the so-called “war on terror.”

Obama said as US troops left Iraq, at least 7,000 should be sent to the Central Asian country and that plans to increase US presence should not wait until the next administration takes office.

The massacre of Afghan civilians exposes the brutal, neo-colonial reality of US imperialist policy that is supported by both parties and both presidential candidates.



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