

# US military kills ten civilians in Afghanistan raid

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On Saturday a US military operation killed at least ten Afghan civilians, among them eight children, in the Narang valley of Kunar province in northeastern Afghanistan near its border with Pakistan.

Press accounts conflicted as to whether the US attack on the remote village of Ghazi Khan was carried out from the air or on the ground by Special Operations. If the latter proves correct, it would be in keeping with reports of heightened activity by Navy Seal and Army Delta Force squads tasked with carrying out assassinations of reputed Taliban members. (see: “US steps up drone attacks, assassinations in AfPak ‘surge’”).

An anonymous “Western military official” told Agence France Press (AFP) that US special operations had been working in the region and “killing a lot of Taliban and capturing a lot of Taliban.”

The governor of Kunar province, Sayed Fazelullah Wahidi, sent a delegation to investigate the attack, which reported that the dead were all civilians and mostly children. This report was confirmed by other local officials and eventually by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Local villagers reported that the dead were members of one family. Wahidi added that the attack was carried out without the knowledge of government officials.

Representatives for the US and NATO forces, following standard operating procedure, publicly denied knowledge of the attack, while anonymously claiming the dead were all insurgents.

“These were people who had a well established

network, they were IED [improvised explosive device] smugglers and also were responsible for direct attacks on Afghan security and coalition forces in those areas,” an unnamed NATO official claimed. “When the raid took place they were armed and had material for making IEDs.” The official offered no evidence to substantiate these assertions.

As reports mounted on Monday that those killed were children, occupation spokesmen refused to either confirm or deny that civilians were killed.

“We will definitely be looking into this,” said Colonel Wayne Shanks, a NATO spokesman. “We take these sort of allegations very seriously.”

The US media dutifully parroted the military line. Typically foul was the *New York Times*, which gave its Monday “news article” over to anonymous US and NATO officials in an attempt to cast doubt on claims of civilian casualties.

“Senior American military officials cautioned that such incidents tend to be complex and that because of the sensitivity about civilian casualties, Mr. Karzai is under enormous pressure to speak out quickly, sometimes before investigations are complete,” the leading newspaper of US liberalism reported.

Facing popular anger over increasing civilian casualties at the hands of US and NATO forces, Karzai publicly condemned the attack. Members of Afghanistan’s US-approved parliament from Kunar and neighboring provinces walked out in protest against the killings.

Elsewhere over the weekend, major fighting took place between insurgents and NATO forces in Baghdis Province in the northwest near the border with Iran, where it was reported that about 60 Afghans bearing rocket propelled grenades attacked a series of occupation outposts. An outpost manned by Afghan security forces reported two police officers killed and three abducted.

Two more US soldiers died over the weekend in southern Afghanistan in separate IED incidents. With three more days left in the year, US casualties in Afghanistan have doubled from the previous year, to 310 from 155. Overall, 560 coalition forces were killed.

There exists no credible count of Afghan civilian casualties in 2009, a testament to the indifference of the US and NATO occupiers, but the figure certainly runs into the thousands.



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