Afghan troops kill two more US soldiers in Kandahar

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Two more US soldiers were shot to death in Afghanistan Thursday by Afghan soldiers and an Afghan civilian instructor, the third such incident in the past ten days, since the burning of Korans at the main US airbase at Bagram touched off a wave of rebellion throughout the country.

While there were conflicting reports about the exact circumstances, press accounts agree that an Afghan soldier and a civilian Afghan literacy teacher opened fire on US soldiers, killing two and wounding four. Both Afghan men fled but were hunted down by attack helicopters and subsequently killed.

The Afghan soldier had been a platoon leader who had patrolled with American soldiers, the *New York Times* reported. At least one other Afghan soldier was killed, but it was not clear whether he too had joined the attack on the Americans, or had been killed by the Afghans in the initial gun battle.

The incident took place about 2:30 a.m. local time at a joint Afghan-NATO base in Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan, near the village of Sangsar, long identified with the Taliban since it was where the group's leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, began his career as an Islamic preacher.

The gun battle broke out only hours after President Barack Obama declared that his written apology to Afghan President Karzai for the Koran burning incident had helped "calm things down" in Afghanistan.

In an interview with ABC News, Obama defended the apology from criticism by Republican presidential candidates, saying it was necessary to "save lives and to make sure our troops who are there right now are not placed in further danger." He said he had acted on the basis of recommendations from US commanders in Afghanistan.

Obama was elected in 2008 at least in part due to his false posturing as an opponent of the war in Iraq. But at a ceremony Wednesday night at the White House, the president defended both the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan as triumphs for the US military. He honored 78 Iraq war veterans, some of them about to be deployed to Afghanistan.

Referring indirectly to the week's events in Afghanistan, Obama maintained, "The overwhelming majority of Afghan troops have welcomed and benefitted from the training and partnering that we're doing. When you think about it, the same was true in Iraq." The result of the US intervention, he claimed, was that by the end of 2014 "Afghans will have capacity just as Iraqis to secure their own country."

In reality, the political crisis that has swept Afghanistan since February 22, when the first mass protests broke out against the Koran burnings, is a major debacle for the Obama administration and the protracted US-NATO occupation, now in its eleventh year.

Both the protests themselves and the series of "green-on-blue" attacks—attacks by Afghan soldiers on American soldiers, in US Army parlance—show the real attitude of the Afghan masses towards the imperialist forces that supposedly "liberated" them from the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime.

Even in those areas most hostile to the Taliban, populated by non-Pashtun groups like Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara, demonstrators have called for the ouster of American and NATO forces and condemned the stooge government of President Hamid Karzai.

In at least one of the three armed attacks, the execution-style slaying of two American officers, a colonel and a major, inside the headquarters of the Afghan Interior Ministry, the gunman was a Tajik, reportedly an intelligence service driver who was

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infuriated by comments made by the Americans mocking the Koran protests, and apparently the Koran itself.

The first of the three incidents took place at an isolated US-Afghan military base in Nangahrar province, in eastern Afghanistan. An Afghan soldier opened fire on a group of US troops, killing two, during a protest outside the base over the Koran burning. He then took advantage of the demonstration to escape unharmed.

In another case, six American special forces soldiers were wounded by a grenade thrown by protesters at a US-NATO base in Kunduz, in northern Afghanistan. On Monday, a suicide car-bomb killed at least nine Afghans at the entrance to a NATO air base in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan, including a soldier, two security guards and six civilians, as well as the two attackers. Four NATO troops were wounded.

The killings inside the Afghan ministry in Kabul were the most glaring security breach, since the "secure room" was supposed to be off-limits to all but the most trusted Afghan intelligence officers.

According to one press report, US-NATO forces have begun stationing armed guards to oversee meetings with Afghan officials, an indication of the nearly complete breakdown of relations between the occupiers and their puppet forces. Other advisers were reported to be limiting their "supervision" to telephone and e-mail contact.

McClatchy News Service cited mounting tensions between Afghan troops and their US trainers. "Afghans hate us, and we don't trust them. We have never felt safe around them," one US officer told McClatchy. Afghan troops have killed a total of 12 US military personnel since the beginning of this year, including the six this week.

Similarly, the *Los Angeles Times* cited another anonymous military source, an American general, saying that such killings were undermining support for the US intervention in Afghanistan even in top circles of the Pentagon and White House. "Too many people are asking, 'Why are we still doing this if the guys you're supposed to be helping keep murdering your soldiers?'" he told the *Times*.

Altogether, Afghan troops killed 70 American soldiers in 46 incidents since 2007, half of them since Obama first ordered the escalation of the US war effort in Afghanistan in the spring of 2009. According to US military investigations, the majority of these attacks were by individual soldiers enraged by the conduct of the Americans, not Taliban infiltrators.

The political backlash in Washington over Obama's apology to Karzai has also exacerbated the protracted crisis between the US and Pakistan, which has blocked US supply convoys into Afghanistan since the massacre last November of 24 Pakistani soldiers, incinerated by US missiles in what Pentagon officials claimed was a case of mistaken identity.

High-level contacts were resumed in February, with Major-General James Mattis, head of the US Central Command, visiting Pakistan for talks with top Pakistani commanders. This was followed by talks between CIA Director David Petraeus and his Pakistani counterparts, and then a luncheon meeting last week between Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Kar in London, on the sidelines of an international meeting on conditions in Somalia.

Clinton declared that the US and Pakistan were "ready to get back to business," suggesting that Obama would soon approve the longstanding State Department recommendation that the US issue a formal apology for the November 26 killings in return for Pakistan reopening supply lines to Afghanistan. This has now apparently been put on hold, as Obama has exhausted the US stockpile of perfunctory and meaningless statements of regret for imperialist atrocities, at least for this month.

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