

US drone strike kills 16 civilians in Afghanistan

Barry Grey
9 September 2013

Afghan authorities on Sunday accused NATO forces of killing 16 civilians, including four children, in a drone missile strike in the country's Kunar province, which borders Pakistan.

Provincial Governor Shuja ul Mulk Jalala said the incident took place on Saturday, when NATO drones blew up a pickup truck carrying civilians after its driver agreed to give a lift to Taliban militants. RT television quoted an eyewitness, Ziarat Gul, as saying, "They shouldn't have attacked the truck because of three or four insurgents. The lives of the civilians were more important and precious."

Gul called the attack "brutal."

On Sunday, the office of Afghan President Hamid Karzai issued a statement saying, "Hamid Karzai considers attacking women and children against all accepted international norms and strongly condemns it."

An earlier report said four women, four children and four men were killed in the attack. The remaining four dead were said to be Taliban fighters.

In keeping with its usual practice, the NATO command acknowledged the attack but claimed that all of the fatalities were Taliban insurgents, not civilians. First Lieutenant AnnMarie Annicelli, a spokeswoman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), said, "We can confirm that we undertook a precision strike in Watarpur district of Kunar, and are able to confirm ten enemy forces killed."

According to the United Nations, over 1,000 civilians were killed in Afghanistan in the first half of this year and an additional 2,000 were injured. These figures, which vastly underestimate the civilian toll resulting from the US invasion and occupation of the country, now in its thirteenth year, represent a 23 percent increase over the same period in 2012.

RT quoted a journalist, Assed Baig, as saying, "Even though NATO calls them precision attacks, they're not very precise. Whether they're in Afghanistan or on the border regions of Pakistan, the civilians are paying the cost of this war."

The attack in Afghanistan followed a drone missile strike early Friday across the border in Pakistan's North Waziristan district that killed six people, allegedly militants of the Haqqani network, which is allied with the Taliban and carries out attacks on US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Seven other people were wounded in the strike.

Pakistani intelligence officials in North Waziristan said two missiles destroyed a house in the Ghulam Kahn area. They said a senior commander of the Haqqani network, Maulvi Sangeen Zadrán, was among the dead. Zadrán has long been targeted for assassination by the Obama administration, which placed him on its list of global terrorists in August of 2011.

Zadrán is said to have played a major role in the capture of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, a US soldier, who disappeared from his post in eastern Afghanistan in 2009 and has since been held by the Haqqani network.

The strike early Friday came less than a week after a US drone killed three people, alleged to be foreign insurgents, in an abandoned seminary in the same region. So far this year, the US has reportedly carried out 20 drone missile strikes in Pakistan.

US drone missile attacks on alleged insurgents and civilians on both sides of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border continue--in violation of international law--even as Washington ratchets up its propaganda in support of an illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Syria, supposedly to defend international law and "human rights."

It has been estimated that 98 percent of the victims of US drone attacks are civilians.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact