

The New York Times peddles excuses for Kunduz hospital slaughter

Thomas Gaist
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In a report Tuesday, “Hospital Attack Fueled by Units New to Kunduz,” the *New York Times* once again served its function as a leading propaganda organ of US imperialism.

The report comes one week after the Associated Press published evidence showing that US forces were scoping out the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, during the days immediately preceding the October 3rd bombing that took the lives of 22 patients and medical staff.

In an attempt to present the incident as the outcome of mistakes and miscommunications by the US and Afghan forces, the *Times* presents a contrived counternarrative in which the airstrikes resulted from the inexperience of the US forces with the area.

“An emerging focus of the investigators is how the lack of familiarity of American and Afghan forces with the area and their lack of experience in working together may have directly contributed to the series of mistaken decisions that led to the attack,” the *Times* states, citing “unnamed American officials.”

“The Afghan units and US forces did not have much or any time working together. The Kunduz operation was a hasty response, which always increases risk as there is insufficient time for deliberate planning,” said the first source cited by the *Times*, an anonymous “senior Defense Department official.”

Another unnamed US government source, paraphrased by the *Times*, attributes the attack to “the withdrawal of American forces from northern Afghanistan that has been part of the gradual drawdown of the United States forces in the country.”

These arguments are laughable. US Special Forces have been operating in Afghanistan for 14 years. Washington maintains permanent military bases throughout the country, which has been under

continuous occupation by US forces since October 2001. The Afghan army was built up and trained by the US military throughout this entire period.

The medical center’s coordinates were known to US and Afghan military authorities for years prior to the attack. The coordinates had been reconfirmed some five days before the attack by MSF personnel, who contacted US forces with the information.

Even more damningly, in mid-October, the Associated Press reported categorically that the MSF hospital was under surveillance by US Special Forces teams during the days immediately prior to the attack.

“American special operations analysts were gathering intelligence on an Afghan hospital days before it was destroyed by a U.S. military attack because they believed it was being used by a Pakistani operative to coordinate Taliban activity,” the Associated Press noted.

“The special operations analysts had assembled a dossier that included maps with the hospital circled,” the AP added.

The AP’s revelations leave little doubt that the strikes against the hospital—a war crime—were deliberate, and were the result of days, if not weeks, of advance planning by the US military.

The *Times* report has been crafted in an effort to soften the impact of this exposure. It was likely written by or in close consultation with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and/or Pentagon, as part of a pattern of cover-up efforts carried out by the US government since the October 3 attack.

Twenty days after the bombing, the US military’s internal investigation, to which the Obama administration has deferred completely, has yet to report any of the essential facts about the bombing. These include: Who specifically ordered the attack?

Have any US military officers been suspended or reprimanded for their involvement in authorizing the strikes? Why did existing safeguards against attacks on known medical centers fail?

According to criticisms published Thursday by former US Marine Corps Lt. Colonel David Evans, US military policy requires that all requests for air support be routed through the local Fire Support Coordination Center (FSCC), where officers are supposed to prevent strikes against civilian areas.

Yet the Pentagon has given no explanation about why the FSCC authorized the October 3 strikes in Kunduz, even though the main evidence in this case consists of orders issued by the US military itself.

Instead of demanding this information, the US media and political establishment has sought to bury the incident and block any independent investigation, issuing a series of changing justifications and excuses.

“Their description of the attack keeps changing—from collateral damage, to a tragic incident, to now attempting to pass responsibility to the Afghanistan government,” MSF noted in an October 5 statement.

Beyond withholding evidence, the US military has committed acts that reek of a cover-up, including an attempted break-and-enter at the remains of the MSF hospital facility.

On October 15, a US military patrol intentionally “rammed” the gate of the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, a Pentagon spokesman was forced to acknowledge on Monday. The US patrol attempted the break-in believing that the MSF staff had all departed, the DOD admitted.

“They had broken through that gate in the interest of safety, and in the belief that (MSF) personnel were not on site,” the DOD spokesman said.

MSF has denounced the US actions and rejected the explanation offered by the Pentagon. “Their unannounced and forced entry damaged property, destroyed potential evidence and caused stress and fear,” an MSF official said.

“This occurred despite an agreement made between MSF and the joint investigation team that MSF would be provided advance notice before each step of the process involving the MSF’s personnel and assets,” MSF noted in a press release responding to the incident.

Even before the attempted break-in, MSF officials

had already concluded that the attack was a deliberate, premeditated massacre ordered by the US military command.

“The hospital was repeatedly hit both at the front and the rear and extensively destroyed and damaged, even though we have provided all the coordinates,” stated MSF director Christopher Stokes. “The extensive, quite precise destruction of this hospital doesn’t indicate a mistake,” Stokes said.

Behind the propaganda exercise being carried out by the *New York Times* and other capitalist media lies the US government’s determination not only to evade prosecution for war crimes, but to continue them. Despite the social backlash, US imperialism views mass terror as a useful instrument in furthering its agenda of world domination. Countless such acts have been perpetrated by US forces, and they will continue until world imperialism is overthrown by the international working class.

By bombing a major hospital, known to the US command for years in advance, US imperialism is putting the world on notice that it will stop at nothing and commit any crime in defense of its geostrategic position. This project will clearly have the support of the *New York Times* for as long as it is allowed to proceed.



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