

11 Afghans Killed in Military Actions Near Pakistan Border

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KABUL, Afghanistan — International military officials are investigating two episodes in which as many as 11 Afghan civilians may have been killed in what appeared to be American-led military actions.

In the more lethal episode, 10 civilians were killed overnight in Kunar Province in eastern Afghanistan in a village where two known Taliban commanders were visiting family members, Afghan officials said.

“Ten civilians were killed last night in a joint Afghan and American operation that took place in Chogam Valley in Shigal District,” said Fazlullah Wahidi, the provincial governor. He said four women, one man and five children between the ages of 8 and 13 were killed; four teenagers were wounded, three of whom were girls.

Increasingly over the past two years, foreign insurgents, sometimes with links to Al Qaeda and other non-Afghan groups, have taken refuge in Kunar and neighboring Nuristan Province. Both provinces have a long border with Pakistan, and insurgents can hide easily in the rugged and forested mountain terrain.

Mr. Wahidi said the target of the Kunar operation was a Taliban leader named Shahpour, “a known and really dangerous Afghan Taliban commander with links to Al Qaeda operatives in Kunar,” and another Taliban commander, known as Rocketi, a Pakistani citizen from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, formerly North-West Frontier Province. Both men were killed in the attack.

Mr. Wahidi said that the operation was not coordinated with Afghan security forces, but that locally hired Afghan paramilitaries were involved in the raid, which included an airstrike and a ground operation. Sometimes United States government agencies other than the military use special commandos.

Maj. Adam Wojack, a spokesman for the International Security Assistance Force, said they had no information on the operation but “were aware of the reports” of civilian deaths and were looking into it.

Local officials in Kunar said that Shahpour was believed to have links to Al Qaeda and narrowly escaped being killed last year when the Americans attacked another Al Qaeda-linked Taliban commander known as Abu Hafez Al-Najde, who also went by the name Commander Ghani. Shahpour was the Taliban leader in charge of nearby Dangam district but was visiting relatives at the time of the raid.

People from Chogam, who brought injured civilians from the remote village where the attack took place to the main hospital in the provincial capital, Asadabad, described a precise but damaging hit on two adjacent houses.

“Two homes were totally destroyed; air power was used during the operation,” said a man who

brought a boy with cuts to the hospital for treatment, but refused to give his name. "There are still dead bodies under the rubble and human flesh scattered in the area."

The other episode in which an Afghan civilian was killed by foreign troops occurred on Tuesday during the daytime.

It took place as NATO-led forces were checking a stretch of heavily traveled highway between Kandahar and Spinbaldak for explosives during a road clearance mission and shot at an oncoming car that did not stop when signaled to do so, Major Wojack said.

Taj Mohammed, the local Afghan border police commander, corroborated much of the ISAF account, but did not see the shooting himself. He said the car was carrying people from a wedding party.

Major Wojack said that the forces followed standard procedure of signaling to the car to stop. After the driver stopped, he started to accelerate toward the convoy, at which point the ISAF soldier shot at the car, Mr. Wojack said.

Taimoor Shah contributed reporting from Kandahar, and an employee of The New York Times from Kunar Province.

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