

The Obama Killing Machine in Afghanistan

The "under-reporting" of civilians killed by foreign forces

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Global Research, March 08, 2010

8 March 2010

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

Let the numbers tell the story. The following presents a detailed summary and analysis of Afghan civilians killed directly – so-called impact deaths – by U.S/NATO forces in Afghanistan during a single month, February 2010. The Obama killing machine left 80-86 dead Afghan and Pashtun civilians. By contrast, the number in February 2009 was 50. The intent here is to set the record straight as regards Afghans killed by the U.S/NATO, and in so doing challenge the UNAMA to move beyond its “faith-based” counting. Regrettably, data put out by the UNAMA gets widely cited less for its validity (which cannot be fact-checked given the organization’s refusal to publish disaggregated data) and more because of a vague public yearning to believe (have faith in) in the U.N’s alleged impartiality and credibility. As I have repeatedly demonstrated, the UNAMA data barely captures one-half of the Afghan civilians killed by U.S/NATO direct actions and by so doing serves Obama and the Pentagon in their news management effort.[1]

In a cemetery marked by green and white flags in Helmand’s provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, 20 miles (30 kilometers) northeast of Marjah, men buried one Marjah resident who died of his injuries suffered in what his brother said was coalition bombing three days ago. “I buried him here, because I couldn’t take him back to my village,” the brother, Sayed Wali, a thin man in a faded blue tunic (from <http://www1.cw56.com/news/articles/world/BO136048/>).

Veteran reporter, Kathy Gannon, with a record of independent reporting on Afghanistan going back to October 2001, noted that the Taliban fighting foreign forces in Marja are villagers.[2] She also provided rare details on victims of foreign forces there: Musa Jan’s home was hit by an aircraft around February 16th killing five occupants inside including children; Sayed Lal was outside in a field with a friend when he was shot by foreign soldiers. Assadullah, 22, was riding his motorcycle when the Americans fired at him shattering his arm; Abdul Hamid, 12, was in front of his home when raiding foreign forces arrived,

...they were running and shooting. I tried to get back in my house, but they shot me in the leg, and there were more bullets, and they shot me again in the belly. Near me some other people fell into a canal. They called a plane and they bombarded.[3]

On 27 February, foreign soldiers killed three people, including two children, in Alasai district of Kapisa province. Mohammad Ashraf, a tribal elder of Kotki area of Alasai district, giving details of the incident, told AIP that last night at around 2200 local time, French soldiers descended from their helicopter in an area far from Waldikhel village of Kotki area and laid an ambush. When people of the area learned about the arrival of these forces, they

started fleeing from their village when the French forces opened fire at them.” The tribal elder added: “As a result of the firing, three people have been martyred, one of whom was nine-year-old Joma Gul, son of Gholam Rasul, another was 10-year-old Aghar Khan, son of Morad Mohammad, and the third one was Faqir Mohammad, a young man.”

A man who identified himself as Hamidullah said he had been in the home as some 20 people gathered to celebrate the birth of a son when a group of men he described as “U.S. Special Forces” surrounded the compound. Saying he witnessed one man’s death, Hamidullah said, “Daoud was coming out of the house to ask what was going on. And then they shot him.” Then they killed a second man, Hamidullah said. The rest of the group were forced out into the yard, made to kneel and had their hands bound behind their back, he said, breaking off crying without giving any further details. A deputy provincial council member in Gardez, Shahyesta Jan Ahadi, said news of the operation has inflamed the local community that blames Americans. “Last night, the Americans conducted an operation in a house and killed five innocent people, including three women. The people are so angry,” he said.



Occupied Afghanistan, March 5, 2010. An Afghan horse cart approaches a U.S. occupation force Stryker armored personnel carrier near Shah-Wali-Kot, Kandahar (photo by John Moore, Getty Images at <http://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/97456605/Getty-Images-News>)



Rare photo of an injured victim of U.S./NATO forces., shot during U.S. offensive near Marjah,

February 14, 2010

(photo by AP Photo/Pier Paolo Cito at <http://topics.philly.com/photo/09Opdbv6joaZZ>)



LASHKARGAH, Feb 17, 2010: An eight-year-old girl weeps while laying head on her knees as foreign soldiers handed over the bodies of her family members killed during the ongoing operation Moshtarak in southern Helmand province. The girl, resident of Marja district, lost her 10 family members in a NATO missile strike (Source: <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2010/02/17/bodies-of-12-civilians-killed-by-nato-handed-over-to-families.html>)

The following Table details the 80-86 Afghan civilians killed by direct U.S/NATO actions along several dimensions. The numbers represent a low-count insofar as they do not include many Pashtun civilians killed in the Pakistani border regions by U.S drone strikes. The Table demonstrates that close to three-quarters of all civilian deaths resulted from air strikes (including the rocket strike in Marja on February 14th). U.S/NATO occupation forces killed civilians in the provinces of Uruzgan, Helmand, Kunduz, Kandahar, Paktia, Kapisa, Farah and in Miranshah (drone strike in Pakistan). The average number of civilians killed in an air strike was ten, whereas in a ground attack it was 2.4. But ground attacks are more deadly for foreign occupation forces. Some 46% of civilian casualties were accounted for by two deadly air strikes - the HiMars rocket strike upon a home in Marjah on February 14th and that by U.S. Special Forces in Dai Kundi, Uruzgan on February 22nd. A Marjah resident noted,

Always when they storm a village the foreign troops never care about civilian casualties at all. And at the end of the day they report the deaths of women and children as the deaths of Taliban.[4]

Table Afghan and Pashtun Civilians killed by U.S/NATO Occupation Forces during February 2010

Day

Location

Number killed

Victim demographics

Female	male	children	undet
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Cause of death

Air strike	ground	combined	undet
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Feb 5

Kunduz

1

1

1

Feb 12/13

Paktia

5

3

2

5

Feb 14

Farah

2

2

2

Feb 14

Helmand

12

5

5

2

12

Feb 14

Helmand

3 (-15)

3

3

Feb 15

Kandahar

5

5

5

Feb 15

Helmand

1

1

1

Feb 17

Helmand

5

5

5

Feb 16-24

Helmand

3

1

2

3

Feb 18

Kunduz

7

	7		
7			
Feb 20			
Helmand			
1			
	1		
	1		
Feb 22			
Kapisa			
3			
	1	2	
	3		
Feb 22			
Uruzgan			
27-33			
4		1	22-28
27			
Feb 24			
Pakistan			
5			
			5
5			
Totals			
All areas			
80-86			
13	27	6	34-40
61	17		2

And what is reported in the mainstream western press? For the first two months of 2010, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission's Fareed Hamidi trumpeted a dip in civilian deaths, announcing for all those willing to listen that 71 civilians had died at the hand of Afghan and foreign forces.[5] The UN naturally parroted this gross under-count. In fact, as I reported, foreign forces alone killed 150-156 Afghan civilians during the first two months of 2010.[6] In other words, the AIHRC only counts one in two Afghan civilians killed by foreign forces. Another font of propaganda, the Soros-bankrolled Open Society Institute, reassured its readers that protecting civilians and protecting troops in Afghanistan was part of the "new" counterinsurgency-style offensive.[7]

In 2008, the UNAMA captured about 70% of Afghans killed by foreign forces, but in 2009 the figure was under 40%, justifiably earning UNAMA's performance as being faith-based (or ideologically-inspired) counting. Sadly, 'groupies' like the western media, peace groups and even the World Socialist Web Site (wsws) uncritically go about citing spurious UNAMA figures, for example endlessly mentioning that Afghan civilian deaths caused by "coalition forces" have declined: naturally they have since the UNAMA missed only 30% of such deaths in 2008, but 60% in 2009.

As I have argued and documented, in fact a trade-off exists between protecting foreign occupation forces and Afghan civilians.[8] Such trade-off is best captured by the ratio of Afghan civilians killed per dead foreign occupation soldier. This ratio was 4.97 in 2007, 3.19 for 2008, 1.94 for 2009, and for Jan-Feb 2010 it was 1.48.[9] In effect, the Obama regimen involved trading off US/NATO soldier deaths for fewer Afghan civilian ones in order to placate critical NATO members.[10]

Conclusion

Air strikes still kill the majority of Afghan civilians. The absolute number of Afghan civilians killed by foreign occupation forces is not declining.[11] The mainstream western media with few exceptions and organizations like UNAMA and the AIHRC de facto serve the Obama news management effort by severely under-reporting Afghan civilians killed by foreign forces.

Notes

1. Most recently in my "Technology Spectacles: the Country that Produced MRE's now gives Afghans Drones and GRR (Government-Ready-to-Rule) Kits," RAWA News (March 3, 2010) at <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2010/03/03/technology-spectacles-the-country-that-produced-mres-now-gives-afghans-drones-and-grr-government-ready-to-rule-kits.html>

2. Kathy Gannon, "Afghan Wounded Tell of More Left Behind in Marjah," Associated press (February 24, 2010) at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iEB2VT9-Ux1pdXs8XuxMSo6zcajgD9E2N4Q00>

3. Ibid

4. Jay Boone, "Thousands of Civilians flee Afghan Region as NATO Plans Onslaught," The

Guardian (February 5, 2010)

5. "Afghanistan: Dip in Civilian Deaths in First Two Months of 2010," IRIN News (March 1, 2010) at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/SHIG-835JLW?OpenDocument>

6. Herold (2010) in Table 1.

7. Erica Gaston, "Protecting Civilians and Protecting Troops in Afghanistan," The AFPAK Channel (February 19, 2010) at <http://blog.soros.org/2010/02/protecting-civilians-and-protecting-troops-in-afghanistan/>

8. In my "Killing the Innocents to Save 'Our Troops'," RAWA News (October 15, 2009) at <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2009/10/15/killing-the-innocents-to-save-our-troops.html>

9. Herold (2010), op. cit

10. See my "Obama's Unspoken Trade-Off," Frontline. India's National Magazine 26, 18 (August 29 - September 11, 2009) at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2618/stories/20090911261813000.htm>

11. See Table 1 in Herold (2010), op. cit.

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