

## U.S. Raid Kills Nine Afghan Children

KABUL, December 7 (IslamOnline.net & News Agencies) – The U.S. military in Afghanistan admitted Sunday, December 7, the killing of nine Afghan children in a U.S. air attack on southeast Afghanistan, regretting "the loss of any innocent life".



A file photo for Afghan children hit by U.S. raids

The raid was hunting a man believed to be responsible for recently killing two contractors working on the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat ring road, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported according to the U.S. army.

The U.S. military said the raid began at about 10:30 am (0600 GMT) Saturday, December 6, south of the town of Ghazni, 130 kilometers (80 miles) southwest of the capital and killed the suspected man.

"Following the attack, coalition ground forces searching the area found the bodies of both the intended target and those of nine children nearby," the U.S. military said in a statement from the coalition's Bagram Air Base headquarters north of Kabul.

"Coalition forces acted after developing extensive intelligence over an extended period of time that determined the known terrorist was at the isolated rural site," the military said.

The statement said a commission is being set up

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to investigate the deaths, adding its forces "follow stringent rules of engagement to specifically avoid this type of incident while continuing to target terrorists".

**Obligation**

After the attack, the U.S. military faced mounting criticism, asserting that the protection of civilians is an "obligation" that any military organization must have.



An Afghani looks at broken glass from a hotels after Kandahar blast

"The special representative and the United Nations family in Afghanistan have been profoundly distressed at the news that nine children were killed Saturday in Ghazni as a result of coalition military action," said U.N. spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva, reading a statement to reporters from U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

"This incident, which follows similar incidents, adds to a sense of insecurity and fear in the country," he said.

Washington has previously said it is not its policy to offer compensation to families of innocent victims killed in a "war zone".

"We are aware that caution is taken but these kinds of mistakes ... do have a negative impact among the population. We have seen this before so it's not as if were speaking without experience," de Almeida e Silva said.

Scores of civilians have been killed in U.S.-led bombing since the start of the campaign against the Taliban regime and al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan in October 2001.

Last month Afghan officials claimed eight civilians were killed in a U.S.-led bombing raid in northeast Afghanistan.

Eleven Afghan civilians were also killed on April 9 when their house was hit by a stray 1,000-pound (450-kilogram) laser-guided bomb in a U.S.

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bombing raid against suspected Taliban in the mountains of southeast Paktika province, which drew criticisms from rights watchdogs.

## **Kandahar Blast**

Saturday's U.S. air raid came as at least 15 people were injured by a bomb blast in a crowded shopping area in Kandahar.

Kandahar security chief Salim Ehsas said one person had serious injuries but there were no fatalities.

The explosion at the Shahidan Chowk area destroyed shops and shattered windows in nearby stores and hotels.

"No foreigners were injured or killed," city police commander Mohammad Hashim told reporters.

Hashim blamed the attack on "the enemies of the government," referring to Taliban militants who continue to wage a bloody campaign in the south and east of Afghanistan two years after their ouster.

President Hamid Karzai said the blast was "a cowardly act aimed at terrorizing the people of Afghanistan" before the loya jirga [grand assembly] which is due to meet from Wednesday, December 10, to debate and approve [the constitution](#).

Afghanistan unveiled last month a draft of its long-awaited constitution, confirming the Islamic identity of the country, enshrining the rule of democracy and paving the way for national elections in 2004.

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