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Nato airstrike kills 33 civilians in Afghanistan

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February 22, 2010

At least 33 civilians have been killed in a Nato airstrike in southern Afghanistan.

Initial reports indicated that Nato attacked a convoy of three vehicles on Sunday as they travelled towards Kandahar. The dead included four women and one child and 12 others were injured.

Amanullah Hotak, head of the Uruzgan provincial council, said that the people had been travelling in three mini-buses through a pass in the Char Cheno district.

Zamari Bashary, a spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry, said: "Isaf troops were suspicious that several civilian vehicles contained insurgents and bombed them."

The Afghanistan Council of Ministers strongly condemned the airstrike, saying it was "unjustifiable".

The US-led Isaf force has started an investigation. "I have made it clear to our forces that we are here to protect the Afghan people and inadvertently killing or injuring civilians undermines their trust and confidence in our mission," US General Stanley McChrystal, commander of foreign forces in Afghanistan, said in the Isaf statement.

The civilian deaths come 10 days after a botched Nato missile strike killed 12 Afghan 48 hours after the start of Operation Moshtarak — a push to dislodge Taliban fighters in Helmand province.

They come as a further blow to the western effort in Afghanistan after after the Dutch Prime Minister conceded that he could not prevent his forces being pulled out this year after the collapse of the Government in The Hague.

Jan Peter Balkenende lost the argument over extending the deployment at a 16-hour Cabinet session, in the first big reversal for the recently appointed Nato leader, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who had publicly requested a continued Dutch commitment.

"Our task as the lead nation [in Uruzgan province] ends in August," Mr Balkenende said. After a three-month draw-down, the Dutch will be completely out of Afghanistan by the end of the year.

February 22, 2010 - At least 33 civilians have been killed in a Nato airstrike in southern Afghanistan. Initial reports indicated that Nato attacked a convoy of three vehicles on Sunday as they travelled towards Kandahar. The dead included four women and one child and 12 others were injured. Amanullah Hotak, head of the Uruzgan provincial council, said that the people had been travelling in three mini-buses through a pass in the Char Cheno district... [63533]



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There are concerns that other countries where public opinion is turning against the Afghan campaign could follow, notably Canada, which has had the biggest proportional casualty rate and is committed to withdrawing its 2,800 troops by the end of next year. Another concern is the continued presence of 1,000 Australian troops. The Canberra Government has repeatedly refused to take over the lead role in Uruzgan if Holland leaves, demanding that a big Nato power provide the main share of troop numbers.

Just as important is the impression that European countries are struggling to find their share of the 10,000 extra troops requested by General McChrystal to join 30,000 extra US troops in Afghanistan, with France ruling out more forces and a fierce debate in Germany.

The Times understands that the Dutch forces in Uruzgan will be replaced by US troops, diverting them from the surge operation against the Taleban.

**:: Lettera del Presidente Saddam Hussein al popolo americano
:: Letter from President Saddam Hussein to the American People**



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:: Article nr. 63533 sent on 22-feb-2010 10:39 ECT

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L'Impero si è fermato a Baghdad, by Valeria Poletti

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