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Germany defends Afghan NATO strike that left up to 90 dead

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From correspondents in Berlin
September 05, 2009 07:26pm

GERMANY'S Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung has sought to justify a NATO air strike in Afghanistan that left up to 90 people dead, triggering widespread concern over civilian casualties.

German troops ordered the air strike yesterday because of the danger posed by Taliban militants who had hijacked fuel tankers in the northern Kunduz region of Afghanistan, Jung said.

"When just 6km away from us, the Taliban take two fuel tankers, that represents a serious danger for us," he was quoted as saying by the *Bild* newspaper on its website today.

Afghan authorities said up to 90 people died in the attack. Witnesses said local villagers were helping themselves to free fuel when the warplanes attacked.

The German army said more than 50 Taliban militants died and denied there were civilian casualties.

Separately four German soldiers were lightly wounded today northeast of Kundus, a military spokesman said.

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