

## Nato air strike 'kills 14 Afghan women and children'

A bungled air strike by Nato helicopters killed 14 women and children in Helmand province, local officials have said.



The helicopter was called in by United States Marines when their base came under small arms fire Photo: AP



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The allegation that helicopters killed five girls, seven boys and two women when they mistakenly fired on two houses full of civilians prompted Hamid Karzai to issue "a final warning" to Nato forces over their tactics.

The coalition immediately sent a fact-finding team of senior officers and Afghan officials to the site of the incident in Naw Zad district to investigate the claim.

A spokesman for the Helmand governor said the helicopter attack on Saturday was called in by United States Marines when their base came under small arms fire.

A local elder called Aslam told reporters shots were fired at Nato helicopters, which are believed to have been American, when they flew into the area.

They returned after 10 to 20 minutes and fired rockets, killing 12 of his relatives, he said.

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[Four Afghan civilians killed in Nato troops attack](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/7582484/Four-Afghan-civilians-killed-after-Nato-troops-attack-bus.html) (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/7582484/Four-Afghan-civilians-killed-after-Nato-troops-attack-bus.html)

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A group of villagers reportedly travelled to Helmand's capital, Lashkar Gah, where they paraded the dead bodies of eight children,

some as young as two-years-old, in front of local journalists outside the governor's residence.

The fact-finding team is led by a Nato general and will interview local residents, marines and pilots and will review cockpit footage if necessary, according to a military source.

Hamid Karzai has repeatedly demanded Nato change tactics to end air strikes and night raids which have caused anger against coalition forces in southern Afghanistan.

The issue causes intense friction between Mr Karzai and Nato commanders who accuse him of stirring up resentment as a populist ploy.

Mr Karzai said: "We have told the Americans and Nato forces several times that uncoordinated operations will result in the killing of innocent civilians and that such operations are inhumane, but still no one has listened."

A separate investigation team was sent to Do Ab district of Nuristan, where the governor accused the coalition of killing 18 civilians and 20 police during air strikes during heavy clashes last week.

Up to several hundred militants threatened to overrun the mountainous district last week until Afghan and Nato forces repelled them with an aerial bombardment and air assault by commandos.

Police officers had just retaken a location during the fighting when it was hit by "friendly fire", the governor said.

"Civilians were killed because the Taliban ... (who) ran out of ammunition fled into the civilians' houses and then the civilians were mistaken with the Taliban and fired upon," he added.