

Afghan Civilians Killed in NATO Airstrike

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ASADABAD, Afghanistan, Feb. 13 (Xinhua) — At least 10 Afghan civilians were killed overnight in a NATO airstrike originally targeting a militants' hideout in the country's eastern province of Kunar, the provincial governor said on Wednesday.

"The NATO-led coalition forces carried out an air raid attack against a compound in Sheltan area of Shegal district at about 11: 00 p.m. Tuesday," Seyyed Fazlullah Wahidi told Xinhua.

He said the raid claimed the lives of 10 civilians besides killing four armed militants.

"Our initial reports said that the killed civilians included five children, four women and a man," Wahidi said, adding five children were also wounded in the incident in the province 185 km east of capital Kabul.

"We are aware of an operation (in eastern Afghanistan) and at this time we are trying to get information," a spokesman with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) told Xinhua.

The ISAF took seriously the allegations of civilian casualties, he said, adding more information would be released to the media as appropriate.

The number of civilian casualties has been soaring in Afghanistan as more than 3,400 Afghan civilians reportedly were killed last year in the militancy-hit country.

The deaths of Afghan civilians in NATO-led troops' operations against Taliban have long been a contentious issue between the Afghan government and U.S. and NATO forces stationed in the country.

Afghan officials had in the past stressed such deaths would further undermine the war against Taliban and terrorist groups and inflame an anti-foreign sentiment in the country.

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