

Media Disinformation regarding America's Afghan War

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Theme: [Media Disinformation, US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

Examining a microcosm can shed light on the larger reality. I have chosen to analyze a small mountain hamlet, Chagoti Ghar (Chergotah), located some forty kilometers east of Khost city in eastern Afghanistan in a time frame separated by eight and a third years - November 23rd 2001 and March 24th 2010. Both times, two Afghan civilians perished as a result of foreign occupation fire. In both instances, the U.S corporate media was silent. Both times, to pierce the veil of silence spun by the American military industrial media information complex (MIMIC) a person had to turn to independent, regional media; in November 2001 to the Peshawar-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency and in March 2010, to the Kabul-based Pajhwok Afghan News.[1] Those killed in 2001 perished during morning prayers and those obliterated in 2010 succumbed after sundown. A women and girl were martyred in November 2001 and a teenaged couple was killed in March 2010. A Bush air strike killed two in 2001 and an Obama ground attack did the same in 2010.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit
Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring

November 23, 2001, Friday

“American aircraft bomb areas in eastern Afghanistan”

SOURCE: Afghan Islamic Press news agency, Peshawar, in Pashto 11:49 GMT 23 Nov 01

Text of report by Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency

Peshawar, 23 November: American aircraft bombed Khost this morning, and one woman and a girl were martyred as a result.

During the Morning Prayer, American war planes bombed the house of a tribal leader, Haji Mohammad Naim Kochi, 20 km to the south of the Khost bazaar in Khost Province. One bomb fell on another house, and as a result one woman and a girl were martyred. Haji Mohammad Naim Kochi helped the Taliban government. And in 1992 he also worked in the previous mujahidin government...

“Civilians die in Khost clash”

SOURCE: Pajhwok Afghan News, Saboor Mangal - Mar 25, 2010 - 17:38

KHOST CITY (PAN): At least two Afghan civilians were killed and four others wounded in crossfire between NATO-led forces and Taliban militants in southeastern Afghanistan, officials said.

The incident occurred late Wednesday night in the Ali Sher district of Khost province, bordering Pakistan.

Civilian casualties have become a source of friction between President Hamid Karzai and Western leaders as deaths of non-combatants are undermining public support for the government.

The clash started after sundown when Taliban insurgents attacked a foreign military base, resident Ali Madad told Pajhwok Afghan News on Thursday.

A mortar shell fired by NATO forces hit a house in the Chargoti village, killing a teenaged couple and injuring a man, his wife and two of their children, Madad added.

The deaths are the latest in a series of civilian casualties occurring after the top commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, Gen Stanley McChrystal, banned night raids in a directive to all foreign troops based in the country.

NATO forces have confirmed the Taliban raid on their outpost inflicted casualties on foreign troops, avoiding providing any further details.

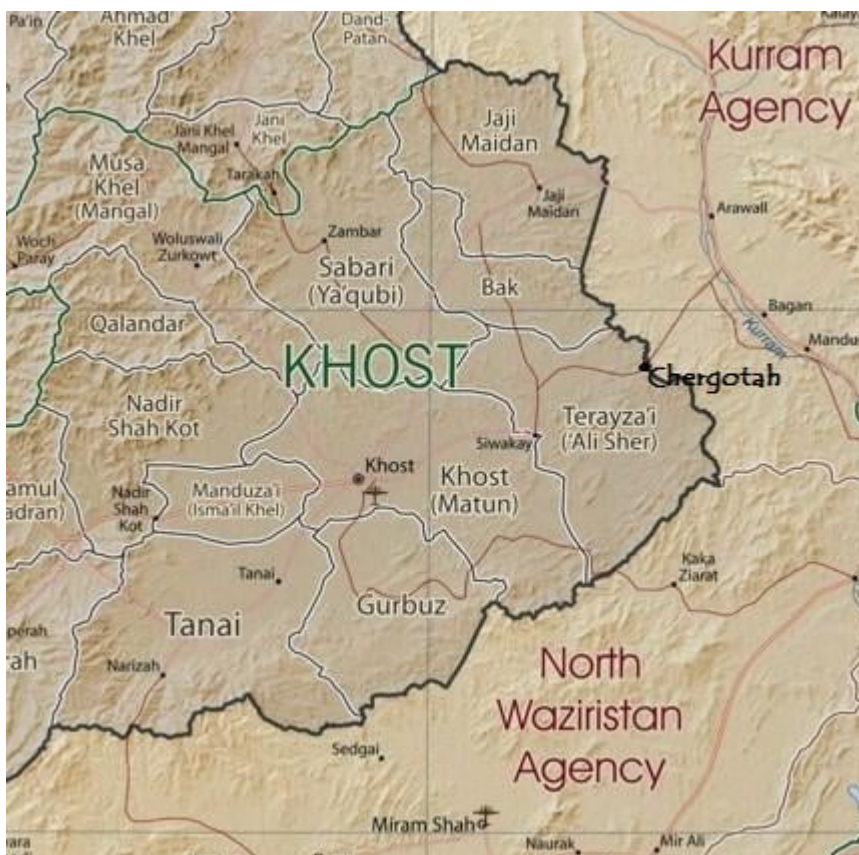
A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed the Western troops suffered heavy casualties in the attack.

The aerial attack on November 23, 2001, was part of the U.S. bombing offensive targeting fleeing Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters who sought refuge in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan. The campaign also involved so-called decapitation strikes (the targeting of alleged enemy leaders). A prime target was veteran mujahideen leader Jalaluddin Haqqani (he remains one still today). Haqqani was renowned as the architect of one of the most stunning military reverses suffered by the Najibullah government – the fall of Khost in 1991. He was named justice minister in the first mujahideen government formed in Kabul in 1992. In 1995, Haqqani defected and allied himself with the emerging Taliban and helped the Taliban secure control of Nangarhar Province in 1996. The defection was a key factor in securing territorial advantage for the emerging Taliban.² At the time, Bin Laden was living there as a guest [and friend] of Haqqani. Haqqani possessed a valuable trove of apparently at least 70 U.S. Stinger missiles. Haqqani led the Taliban's brutal military campaign north of Kabul during the winter of 1996/7, sweeping through the towns of Estalif and Qarabagh, carrying out what his opponents described as ethnic cleansing of the Tajik minority there. In 1998, he switched posts, being appointed to the important position of Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs in the Taliban government. Haqqani is known to have had close ties with Pakistan's intelligence agency, the I.S.I., dating back to the 1980s. His relationship with Bin Laden led to the building of many training camps during the 1980's in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar and Paktia (especially south of Khost). In late September 2001, Omar appointed Haqqani as commander-in-chief of the Taliban armed forces. He also served as governor of Paktia province.

In mid-October 2001, Jalaluddin commented to local reporters,

“We will retreat to the mountains and begin a long guerrilla war to reclaim our pure land from infidels and free our country like we did against the Soviets... We are eagerly awaiting the American troops to land on our soil, where we will deal with them in our own way... The Americans are creatures of comfort. They will not be able to sustain the harsh conditions that await them.”

Three weeks later the U.S. began its bombing effort targeted specifically at killing Jalaluddin Haqqani. The bombing on November 23rd was part of this assassination campaign. During Morning Prayers, U.S war planes attacked the home in the mountainous village, Chagoti, of the tribal leader and former Taliban supporter, Haji Mohammad Naeem Kochi, but Kochi was absent. Another bomb obliterated a nearby home killing a woman and an 8-year old girl.



Source: modified version of a map available at:

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/txu-oclc-308991615-afghan_pakistan_2008.jpg

But no mention was made in U.S. official press releases or in the U.S. media. A search of Lexis-Nexus for the month of November 2001 reveals not a single mention of Chagoti by the western press. Silence was deceit, part of a well-orchestrated official U.S. campaign to carefully manage reporting of America's Afghan war.[2] The only references to the American bombing of Chagoti Ghar were to be found in the Afghan Islamic Press, Pakistan's Jang newspaper and in Russia's Pravda.[3] Accurate news was published in Moscow and Peshawar not in New York City. I immediately entered this incident into my web-based data base.[4]

My own efforts to report as accurately as possible upon the civilian casualty toll of the U.S. Afghan bombing campaign given the existing data limitations, was greeted with charges of being anti-American, unpatriotic, replete with double-counting, and opprobrium was caste

upon using a source like the Afghan Islamic Press, etc.[5] Even the left-of-center in the United States went to pains to discredit my tally of Afghan civilians killed by the U.S.[6] The propagandistic cant was well-critiqued by Philip Hammond,

A number of reporters declared the killing of Afghan civilians to be inherently un-newsworthy, and CNN instructed its journalists to 'balance' reports of casualties with justifications for war. The study of casualty figures produced by US academic Marc Herold was often dismissed or attacked, and the much lower estimate of civilian deaths offered by a Project for Defence Alternatives report was presented as more credible. In fact, however, the latter is based on an eccentric method whose only rationale can be a desire to produce as low a figure as possible. The report, drawing on a variety of sources but favouring Western ones as the most reliable, used the following formula in cases where no precise numbers were available: "some or a few" deaths was interpreted as 1, "a dozen or more" was interpreted as 3-4, "dozens" was interpreted as 8-10, "scores" was interpreted as 10-15, "hundreds" was interpreted as 40-60' (quoted p. 50).[7]

And the left-of-center in the United States persists now in such practice by mindlessly quoting figures on Afghan civilian casualties put forth by the UNAMA.[8]

Two months later, in January 2002, the hamlet of Chagoti Ghar was again bombed by U.S war planes.[9] On January 1, 2003, the 62-year-old Haji Naeem Kochi, a tribal elder of the nomadic Kuchi tribe, who had been an object of a U.S manhunt since 2001, was finally seized by U.S occupation forces while on his way to meet Karzai to discuss a tribal dispute.[10] He was captured and whisked off to the American gulag in Guantanamo where he languished for close to two years. He was released in September 2004 when the Americans conceded he was "insignificant."

In August 2009, the Karzai regime and its U.S. ally began construction of an Afghan border police post near the Tere Zayi district border crossing. The ostensible rationale was to prevent infiltration into Khost Province of enemy fighters from Pakistan. The local Kuchi tribes' people vehemently opposed the base construction.[11] On a rugged mountaintop bordering Pakistan, less than two miles from Northern Waziristan, now sits Combat Outpost Chergotah in the easternmost part of Khost province.[12] Two U.S. occupation soldiers based in the new border post were killed while on patrol by RPG/small arms fire on March 9th.

In the evening of March 24th 2010, resistance fighters attacked the Afghan/U.S post, spurring a fire fight. At 11 PM, a mortar shell fired by "NATO forces" (really by the 4th Combat Brigade of the US Army's 25th Infantry Division) hit a home in Chagoti (Chergotah), killing a teenaged couple and injuring a man, his wife and two of their children as reported by the independent, Pajhwok Afghan News.



U.S. Army mortar men from the Indiana National Guard provide 120 mm mortar-fire support to soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team at Combat Outpost Chergotah in the Terezeyi district of Afghanistan's Khost province, Dec. 4, 2009. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Stephen J. Otero (Source: <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2414107/posts>)

NATO issued a statement at 3:44 AM EST noting that a firefight had taken place in the night

of March 24/25th near an ISAF base and that in the engagement six civilians received shrapnel wounds, two of whom later died.[13] Some ten minutes later, the Chinese news agency Xinhua General News Service published a report based upon an interview with a local tribal leader, Ramazan Kuchi, who said at 11 PM local time a NATO artillery shell hit a house killing two children and wounding four other persons (including two children, a lady and a man).[14] Shortly thereafter, Agence France Presse and the Deutsche Presse-Agentur picked up the story merely reproducing the original NATO release.[15] The independent Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) then provided a report noting the Taliban had attacked the NATO border post on the outskirts of the Alisher district and a missile fired by the NATO forces in retaliation struck a home causing six civilian casualties.[16] The AIP interviewed a resident of Babrak Tana who said the NATO projectile hit a house killing two people and wounding four others. Only the AIP, Xinhua and Pajhwok carried interviews with local residents. The left-of-center U.S. media in the United States merely parroted the official NATO report even misrepresenting the incident as a “NATO attack” when in truth it was carried out by the 25th Infantry of the U.S. Army.[17]

For its part, the occupation forces’ ISAF Joint Command issued an “operational update” mentioning that on the night of March 24/25th its forces had searched a compound outside Zerah Ghar, Tere Zayi district of Khost Province and captured “two Taliban sub-commanders” as well as “several other insurgents,” lots of ammunition and money.[18] The official communiqué concluded with the usual, “no shots were fired, and no Afghan civilians were harmed during these operations.” But a day later, when the two civilian deaths in Chergotah could no longer be concealed, NATO published the usual promise of an investigation and the “our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of this terrible accident and their families.”[19]

In the U.S. mainstream media, complete silence reigned once again. Chagoti Ghar (Chergotah) simply does not exist. The deaths of an Afghan woman, an 8-yr old Afghan girl and a teenaged couple are unworthy of mention in America. Another immaculate deception, or conception in which a teenaged couple was first transformed into two Taliban sub-commanders. That is, until a courageous, independent investigator challenges the official U.S./NATO lies.[20]

Notes

[1] “American aircraft bomb areas in eastern Afghanistan,” Afghan Islamic Press news agency (1149 GMT, November 23, 2001) and Saboor Mangal, “Civilians die in Khost Clash,” Pajhwok Afghan News (17:38, March 25, 2010)

[2] I have analyzed this issue on my “Truth about Afghan Civilian Casualties Comes Only Through American Lenses for the U.S. Corporate Media [our modern-day Didymus],” in Peter Phillips and Project Censored [eds], Censored 2003: the Year’s Top 25 Stories [New York: Seven Seas Publishing, 2002], pp. 265-294 and in many other writings such as “Et Plus Ca Change... U.S. Reporters Transcribe the Colonel’s Wisdom,” Cursor.org (March 10, 2003) at <http://cursor.org/stories/morethingschange.htm> and in The Balochistan Post (Quetta, Pakistan) (February 24, 2003) .

[3] “Safiullah Gul, “US Spy Planes, Copters Hover Pakistan Tribal Belt – Bacha Khan Settles Scores with Zakim Khan as US Jets Bomb Khost,” Pravda.Ru (January 25, 2001) at <http://english.pravda.ru/main/2002/01/25/26010.html>

[4] See "A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States' Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan, October 7, 2001 - May 31, 2003" (PDF Format - 620KB)," page 119 at <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mwherold>

[5] Examples of such frequently ad hominem, vitriolic, and unsubstantiated attacks include such fine exemplars as Dr. Frank, "Marc Herold. Master Analyst," Dr. Frank's What's-It (December 21, 2001) at http://www.doktorfrank.com/archives/2001/12/marc_herold_master_analyst.html Lucinda Fleeson, "The Civilian Casualty Conundrum," American Journalism Review (April 2002) at <http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=2491>, "The Case Against Marc Herold," The Angry Cyclist (October 28, 2002) at http://angrycyclist.blogspot.com/2002_09_29_angrycyclist_archive.html, as well as various writings by Matt Welch, Ian Murray, Jeffrey Isaacs, and Joshua Muravchik.

[6] detailed in Edward S. Herman, "The Cruise Missile Left, pt.2," The Anti-ANSWER Crusade and Z Magazine, <http://musictravel.free.fr/political/political37.htm>

[7] Philip Hammond, "Do Mention the War: 9/11 and After," Media Culture & Society 25 (2003): 559

[8] For a critique, see my "One Month of the Obama Killing Machine in Afghanistan: Data and a Lesson for the UNAMA and its Groupies. Sadly, 'groupies' like the western media, peace groups and even the World Socialist Web Site (wsws) uncritically go about citing spurious UNAMA figures, for example endlessly mentioning that Afghan civilian deaths caused by "coalition forces" have declined," RAWA News (March 10, 2010), <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2010/03/10/one-month-of-the-obama-killing-machine-in-afghanistan-data-and-a-lesson-for-the-unama-and-its-groupies.html>

[9] "Aviacao dos EUA bombardeia suposta base de rede Al Qaeda," UOL Ultimas Nocticias (17:00 January 24, 2002)

[10] Andy Worthington, "Expelled UN Official Criticizes Afghan Policy re: Taliban and Defends ex-Guantanamo Detainee," Andyworthington.com (February 16, 2008), <http://www.andyworthington.co.uk/2008/02/16/expelled-un-official-criticizes-afghan-policy-re-taliban-and-defends-ex-guantanamo-detainee/>

[11] Saboor Mangal, "Kochis War of Boycotting Elections," Pajhwok Afghan News (August 13, 2009)

[12] Described in "Soldiers Work with Afghan Border Police," American Forces Press Service (December 23, 2009), <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2414107/posts>

[13] "Civilians killed in Khost," Targeted News Service (3:44 AM EST, March 25, 2010)

[14] "2 Children Killed as Gun Shell Hit a House in E. Afghanistan," Xinhua General News Service (3:55 AM EST, March 25, 2010)

[15] "NATO Soldier, Two Civilians Killed in Afghan Unrest," Agence France-Presse (1:49 PM GMT, March 25, 2010) and "Afghan Civilians Killed in NATO-Taliban Crossfire," Deutsche Presse-Agentur (12:45 PM EST, March 25, 2010)

[16] "NATO Missile Kills Two Civilians in Afghan East," Afghan Islamic Press (March 25, 2010)

[17] Jason Dietz, "Afghan Civilians Killed in NATO Clash," Antiwar.com (7:16 PM, March 25, 2010),
<http://news.antiwar.com/2010/03/25/afghan-civilians-killed-in-nato-clash/>

[18] "IJC operational Update, March 25," ISAF Joint Command (03:37, March 25, 2010)

[19] "Civilians killed in Khost," US State News (9:07 PM EST, March 26, 2010)

[20] as in the case of The London Times' reporter Jerome Starkey's fabulous reporting of an incident which completely destroyed another US/NATO immaculate deception, see his "U.S.-led Forces in Afghanistan are Committing Atrocities, Lying, and Getting Away with it," Nieman Watchdog (Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University) (March 22, 2010),
<http://www.niemanwatchdog.org/index.cfm?backgroundid=00440&fuseaction=background.view>

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