

NATO used Afghan children to detect land-mines: ex-German soldier

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Soldiers of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have repeatedly used Afghan children to detect land-mines in war-ravaged country, said a former German ISAF officer in Berlin on Thursday.

Unveiling his new book titled 'Final Station', Achim Wohlgetan pointed out that children were misused by ISAF forces to find land- mines in the Kabul region in 2002.

ISAF soldiers threw apples on an area and then waited to see what would happen. If the children were to run to pick up the apples, and there was no explosion, the area was declared safe, according to Wohlgetan.

A German Defense Ministry spokesperson voiced serious questions over some of the claims which Wohlgetan made in his book.

He alleged that German soldiers had operated outside the mandated area of ISAF in Afghanistan in 2002.

Speaking at a routine government press briefing in Berlin on Wednesday, Christian Dienst expressed strong doubts over claims made by Wohlgetan who said that several troops had knowingly violated the ISAF zone.

The 41-year-old ex-German soldier quit military service in 2006 as a lower ranking officer.

According to Dienst, Wohlgetan lacked an overview of all aspects of the security structure.

Some 3,500 German troops are deployed in mainly northern Afghanistan.

Germany has faced intense pressure in recent months from its Nato allies, notably the US, Britain and Canada, to widen its military presence into southern Afghanistan where NATO troops are battling a revitalized Taliban insurgency.

A spate of kidnappings of German nationals in Afghanistan has also negatively influenced public opinion about the western military campaign in the war-ravaged country.

According to the latest opinion polls, most Germans oppose the western war in Afghanistan.

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