

2015

# A Tale of Two Airstrikes: The Effect of Mass-Casualty Airstrikes on Security in Farah and Kunduz Provinces

Saraswati Rathod  
srathod2@wellesley.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection>

---

## Recommended Citation

Rathod, Saraswati, "A Tale of Two Airstrikes: The Effect of Mass-Casualty Airstrikes on Security in Farah and Kunduz Provinces" (2015). *Honors Thesis Collection*. 261.  
<http://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection/261>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. For more information, please contact [ir@wellesley.edu](mailto:ir@wellesley.edu).

A TALE OF TWO AIRSTRIKES:  
The Effect of Mass-Casualty Airstrikes on Security in Farah and Kunduz Provinces

by Saraswati Pradipsinh Rathod

Thesis submitted to  
the Department of Political Science, Wellesley College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts  
April 23, 2015

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	3
Chapters	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	4
A. The Importance of Winning “Hearts and Minds”.....	7
B. Airpower and COIN.....	10
C. AirStrikes and Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan.....	12
D. Previous Research.....	14
E. Research Design.....	17
II. FARAH PROVINCE.....	19
A. Provincial Background.....	19
B. The Airstrike.....	22
C. The Reaction.....	27
D. Farah Province Security Analysis.....	43
E. Farah Conclusions.....	49
III. KUNDUZ PROVINCE.....	50
A. Provincial Background.....	50
B. The Airstrike.....	55
C. The Reaction.....	60
D. Kunduz Province Security Analysis.....	74
E. Kunduz Conclusions.....	79
IV. CONCLUSIONS.....	80
Bibliography.....	85

I'd like to offer special thanks to my advisor Professor Paul K. MacDonald for his patient guidance and encouragement throughout this process and to Professor Stacie Goddard for her helpful feedback. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the people who allowed me to interview them for this research paper. Their willingness to give their time generously is greatly appreciated.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

On August 7, 2014, President Obama announced that he had authorized limited airstrikes in Iraq against a rapidly growing militant network known as the Islamic State. Since then, a broad coalition—including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, France and Canada—have joined the bombing campaign. The air campaign has since spread to Syria. Airstrikes have been thrust into the spotlight recently, in part because of their integral role in the campaign against the Islamic State but also because of the Saudi bombing campaign in Yemen. The air campaign in Iraq and Syria has both its proponents and its critics. Rebecca Grant, president of IRIS Independent Research, argued that air power was an appropriate tool to lend immediate assistance to our allies. Sending air support, she said, is much faster than deploying ground troops, and precision technology makes airstrikes highly effective.<sup>1</sup> Airstrikes were also a way to avoid sacrificing American ground troops, though Grant did not mention this in her op-ed. Joe Felter, a retired U.S. Special Forces officer, was more skeptical. He argued that airstrikes are only effective when coordinated by competent, well-trained forces on the ground, which the United States did not have in Iraq. Furthermore, he said, “[W]e can’t bomb what may be the most insidious threat in the fight against ISIS and other extremists: The hostile ideology that inspires misguided young Muslim men from around the world to travel to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS.”<sup>2</sup> Felter also warned that civilian casualties can play into the hands of the Islamic State by increasing resentment against foreign forces. Now that the bombing campaign has been underway for over eight months, reports of civilian casualties are emerging. Allegations that the

---

<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Grant, “Air Power Is Right for This Mission in Iraq,” *The New York Times*, 14 Aug. 2014, Web.

<sup>2</sup> Joe Felter, “Airstrikes Can Only Do So Much to Combat ISIS,” *The New York Times*, 14 Aug. 2014, Web.

aerial campaign has killed at least 130 civilians in total are currently being investigated, adding to the controversy of the U.S.-led air war.

The debate over the effectiveness of the bombing campaign, in many ways, is not new. Air power has long been a critical component of U.S. strategy in counterinsurgency warfare. Airstrikes were an integral part of the coalition strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq, used to support ground troops and attack insurgent strongholds. During the Vietnam War, U.S. military aircraft carried out a sustained bombardment of North Vietnamese territory in a campaign known as Operation Rolling Thunder. Air power was also infamously used in Laos and Cambodia to order to root out Vietnamese communists who had escaped to border regions.

Airstrikes have been, and will most likely continue to be, a key component of U.S. counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. The U.S. military has learned much about the use of U.S. airpower in COIN since the days of the carpet bombing in Cambodia. However, if we are to continue to use airstrikes in COIN campaigns in order to fight violent extremism, we must understand the effects of those strikes on local security. After all, it is the mission of counterinsurgents to bring stability to the host nation. Therefore, the very first criterion for a counterinsurgency tool should be that it does not worsen the security situation on the ground.

Yet relatively little research exists which explores the effects of airstrikes on local levels of violence. The few studies which do exist predict a localized increase in insurgent activity in the areas where airstrikes took place. However, these studies also limit themselves to simply tracking the number and location of insurgent attacks rather than examining the broader character of insurgent violence and how much that violence impacts the daily lives of local residents. For instance, if there is an increase in attacks after an airstrike but those attacks are highly localized,

small in scale, and largely unsuccessful, then that increase may not pose much of a threat to local security. A roadside bomb that is set off by accident and does no harm is very different from a highly-orchestrated Taliban raid on multiple police checkpoints that kills a large number of officers. Additionally, large nation-wide statistical analyses prevent us from deeply examining the ways in which specific local conditions influence the repercussions of an airstrike. For example, it is worthwhile to explore in detail whether the type of people killed in a strike, the post-harm mitigation efforts, or the sophistication of the Taliban's propaganda efforts after the strike influence whether there is a spike in violence after an air raid. We might, for example, expect that a strike that kills women and children elicits a stronger response. Overall, more nuance is needed if we are to truly evaluate the effect of airstrikes on local insurgent violence.

To evaluate these questions, I will turn to two cases in Afghanistan—the May 4 airstrike in Farah Province and the September 4 airstrike in Kunduz Province, both of which occurred in 2009 in areas that had experienced relatively low levels of violence after the 2001 invasion. Both incidents were mass-casualty airstrikes, which resulted in the deaths of anywhere between 30 to over 100 civilians, depending on which source is providing the estimates. I have used news reports and interviews with military personnel and civilian aid workers who were on the ground in Kunduz to better understand the effect of the airstrikes on local security. The outcomes in each province diverged greatly from one another. While one airstrike resulted in widespread political backlash and an increase in insurgent violence, the other resulted in virtually no political backlash and a decrease in insurgent violence. Overall, the results demonstrate that the changes in the security landscape, even after a large mass-casualty airstrike, are subtle and contingent upon local conditions.

## **The Importance of Winning “Hearts and Minds”**

Counterinsurgency has taken on many different names over the decades. In fact, although counterinsurgency was conducted in different shapes and forms in decades following the Vietnam War, COIN strategy was relegated to a minor role in U.S. military doctrine and training after the Vietnam War. Only during the Iraq and Afghan Wars did military strategists begin seriously reintegrating COIN lessons into official doctrine.<sup>3</sup> The culmination of these efforts was the population-centric FM 3-24 Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual. FM 3-24, published in 2007, defined an insurgency as “the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region.” Counterinsurgency, its mirror image, was defined as the combined civilian and military efforts used to defeat and contain the insurgency.<sup>4</sup> In other words, counterinsurgency is any and all efforts to keep a current government in power in the face of an organized insurrection.

FM 3-24 adheres strongly to the old axiom that counterinsurgency cannot be won by military force alone but must be achieved by winning the hearts and minds of the people. It is widely recognized that insurgents rely on a backbone of civilian support, without which they cannot survive for long. Civilians provide insurgents with money, manpower, intelligence, and assistance in escape and evasion from counterinsurgent forces.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes support is active,

---

<sup>3</sup> David Fitzgerald, 2013, *Learning to Forget US Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq*, Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph A. Nagl, J. F. Amos, S. Sewall & David H. Petraeus, 2008, *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (No. 3-24), University of Chicago Press, 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Nagl et. al., 2008.

taking the form of armed resistance, the transportation of explosive materials, or the placement of bombs. At other times, support is passive. For example, local inhabitants may refrain from disclosing to counterinsurgent troops where a bomb was planted,<sup>6</sup> give insurgents food or water, or allow them to move freely in their village.<sup>7</sup> Chairman Mao Zedung, who led the Communist guerrillas to victory in China, famously compared the Red Army to a fish and the people to water. Without the water, he said, the fish cannot survive. It follows that the job of counterinsurgents is to gain the trust of locals in order to cut off support for insurgents and co-opt the advantages associated with civilian support—to separate the fish from the water they need to survive.

According to FM 3-24, pro-government and anti-government forces compete for the support of the population, meaning that the legitimacy of the host government and its allies is essential in winning a counterinsurgency campaign. For this reason, counterinsurgents must limit civilian casualties, put themselves in harms way, and work with the local government to establish civil institutions in order to maintain confidence in the Afghan government and its allies.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> David F. Eisler, 2012, "Counter-IED Strategy in Modern War," *Military Review*: 9-15, *Cimic Web*.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio Giustozzi and Niamatullah Ibrahimi, 2012, "Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of Anti-Government Mobilization in Afghanistan, 1978-2011," Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (January).

<sup>8</sup> Nagl et. al. 2008.

Despite the population-centric nature of counterinsurgency literature,<sup>9</sup> there are those who believe that the United States has failed to win over the population in Afghanistan. Colonel Gian Gentile, a leading critic of U.S. counterinsurgency policy, argued in his book *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* that it is impossible for any foreign occupying force to win over the local population, making counterinsurgency little more than a fantasy, unless the foreign forces are willing to commit to a multi-generational effort. While official rhetoric plays up the importance of reconstruction, soft power, and even non-violence, Gentile says that counterinsurgency efforts throughout history, all the way up to Iraq and Afghanistan, only reaffirm the fact that “war at its most basic level is about death and destruction.”<sup>10</sup>

Given the crucial role of air power in U.S. counterinsurgency efforts and the reluctance of the U.S. military to give up airstrikes even when President Karzai repeatedly called for their ban, it is crucial to understand whether civilian casualties from airstrikes permanently isolate the local population. If they do, and coalition forces are unable to mitigate these effects in the long run, then this would lend credence to thinkers like Gentile who argue that the way the United States conducts COIN operations ensures its failure.

---

<sup>9</sup> Nagl et. al. 2008;

Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, 2009, “Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars, *International Organization*, Vol. 63, No. 1, Cambridge University Press, p. 67-106;

David Galula, 1964, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice*, New York: Praeger;

David Kilcullen, 2009, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

<sup>10</sup> Gian P. Gentile, 2013, *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*, New York: The New Press, p.7.

## Airpower and COIN

Air power has been used extensively in COIN efforts. It can take on many different forms, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); transportation and logistical support; deterrence through a threatening “presence overhead;”<sup>11</sup> and kinetic operations, which include airstrikes. In this paper, I will focus on the kinetic uses of airpower. Since the innovation of precision munitions, airstrikes have become an attractive solution for attacking insurgents while minimizing U.S. and local civilian casualties. Airstrikes can also be used to “decapitate” an insurgency’s leadership, wear out its broader membership,<sup>12</sup> destroy insurgent bases and weapons stockpiles, and provide close air support for counterinsurgent ground troops.<sup>13</sup> This last function is particularly important in Afghanistan, for reasons I will discuss in the next section. Furthermore, because airstrikes can target insurgents in open areas, they can prevent insurgents from switching from guerrilla to conventional warfare,<sup>14</sup> as Mao’s Communist guerrillas did in order to ultimately defeat the Nationalists in China’s Civil War. Put differently, the ability to rain fire from the sky keeps insurgents operating in the shadows. Air power also has the advantage of speed and mobility, allowing the counterinsurgent to respond quickly to insurgent attacks, “unconstrained by terrain or artificial boundaries between units.”<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Allen G. Peck, 2007, “Airpower’s Crucial Role in Irregular Warfare,” *Air & Space Power Journal*.

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Pape, 2004, “The True Worth of Air Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, 83.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen D. Biddle, 2006, “Allies, Airpower and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Alan J. Vick, Adam Grissom, William Rosenau, Beth Grill, and Karl P. Mueller, 2006, “Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions,” Santa Monica: Rand.

<sup>15</sup> Peck, 2007.

Because an insurgency is decentralized and at times seemingly omnipresent among the local population on the ground, fighting from the air gives the counterinsurgent its own kind of omnipresence in the sky. Given the status of the United States as an occupier in Afghanistan, some consider it more desirable for U.S. troops to rely more on air power and less on ground troops in order to maintain a “smaller intrusive footprint.”<sup>16</sup> This could help avoid aggravating nationalist sentiments. Then again, if the response to civilian casualties caused by airstrikes depends on local conditions, then it is necessary to have people on the ground to assess and manage those local conditions. In this case, it might be unwise to try to replace a localized COIN mission with a detached air war.

All of the advantages listed above have been cited as reasons why kinetic airpower is a useful tool in counterinsurgency. The fact that airstrikes are playing a key role in the fight against the Islamic State today shows that the current administration believes aerial bombing has a role to play in modern warfare.

However, airstrikes are also responsible for high civilian casualties, despite the advent of precision technology. This owes mainly to the difficulty in distinguishing an insurgent from a local innocent, which is difficult enough from the ground and even harder from the sky. While some critics argue that airstrikes are simply ineffective in counterinsurgency operations,<sup>17</sup> others argue that they are downright counterproductive. A statistical analysis conducted by Lyall (2014) concludes that airstrikes have the unintended effect of prompting insurgents to launch further attacks to prove their resilience.<sup>18</sup> An analysis of the bombing campaign in Vietnam shows that

---

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Baltrusaitis, 2008, “Airpower: The Flip Side of COIN,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, p.92.

<sup>17</sup> Pape, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Jason Lyall, “Bombing to Lose? Airpower and the Dynamics of Coercion in Counterinsurgency Wars,” 2014.

higher frequencies of bombing in civilian hamlets are followed by higher levels of control by the Viet Cong in those hamlets.<sup>19</sup> These studies conclude that airstrikes actually make the job of a counterinsurgent harder by worsening the security of the communities that are targeted.

### **AirStrikes and Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan**

Airpower has played a critical role in both Iraq and Afghanistan. However, it has been especially important in Afghanistan, where relatively small numbers of U.S. and allied troops were scattered across the country, while most resources were being funneled into Iraq. Vulnerable to ambush and far from reinforcements, pro-government forces relied on aerial support to be just one phone call away in the case of an insurgent attack. With the insurgents possessing few large military-industrial targets like air bases, command posts, and arms factories, kinetic air power has been used mainly as support for coalition and Afghan ground troops.<sup>20</sup> In these operations, aircraft rely on local intelligence to confirm that their targets are insurgents, not civilians. After the Taliban resurgence in 2005, the role of close air support expanded greatly, steadily increasing year by year. From 2005 to 2006, air support of ground troops engaged in combat increased fivefold. The next year, that number rose by another 75%.<sup>21</sup> Broadly speaking,

---

<sup>19</sup> M.A. Kocher, T.B. Pepinsky, and S.N. Kalyvas, 2011, "Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War," *American Journal of Political Science*, 55: 201–218.

<sup>20</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg, 2010, "The Afghanistan Air War," *National Journal*, (accessed November 30, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Lara M. Dadkhah, 2008, "Close Air Support and Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan," *Small Wars Journal*.

air support has increased alongside the growth of the insurgency. From 2004 to 2010, the number of close air support and air strike sorties rose by 97%.<sup>22</sup>

Despite high-profile airstrikes which resulted in large civilian casualties, the air campaign in Afghanistan has been considered remarkably restrained. The Center for Strategic and International Studies reported in 2010 that “only a limited number of combat sorties actually dropped unguided or guided heavy munitions. Most only used guns, small rockets or did not use a weapon.”<sup>23</sup> Risk management procedures call for extensive observation of an area which can range from hours to days to determine whether civilians are at risk. Technical reconnaissance and ground intelligence are employed for the same purposes. Coalition forces often drop leaflets on villages warning civilians that troops are moving in. Before launching a strike, aircraft are expected to carry out “shows of force” during which they fly noisily, close to the ground to scatter insurgents and civilians with the goal of ending the conflict without using force. When there is collateral damage, it usually takes place during unplanned close air support missions and reflects poor intelligence rather than a willingness to inflict civilian casualties in order to kill insurgents.<sup>24</sup> Stanley McChrystal’s tactical directive released in 2009 placed heavy restrictions on the use of airstrikes in order to limit civilians casualties. That action was credited with facilitating a drop by more than a half in the number of civilians killed in airstrikes by September 2010.<sup>25</sup> In fact, insurgents consistently caused more civilian casualties than pro-government forces in the course of the Afghan war. Yet, of civilian casualties caused by pro-government

---

<sup>22</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, 2008, “Air Combat Trends in the Afghan and Iraq Wars,” Center for Strategic and International Studies.

<sup>23</sup> Cordesman, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Dadkhah, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Freedberg, 2010.

forces, air power continued to account for the largest percentage, making it a focal point for criticism against NATO forces.

## **Previous Research**

Studies show that airstrikes lead to an increase insurgent activity. The previously-mentioned Lyall study (2014) found that airstrikes led to a spike in insurgent attacks. Because the spike was unrelated to civilian casualties, Lyall concluded that insurgents were launching the attacks to prove their resilience after a defeat by a technologically-superior enemy. A broad statistical analysis conducted by Condra, Felter, Iyengar, and Shapiro in 2010 looked at all instances of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, not just those caused by airstrikes, and found a long-run and highly-localized spike in violence, leading the authors to conclude that there is a notable revenge factor in Afghanistan in response to civilian casualties.<sup>26</sup> This theory would seem to fall in line with the often-cited Pashtun cultural code of *Pashtunwali*, which places a high value on personal revenge (*badal*). However, the Lyall study contradicts the theory that the spike in violence is driven by revenge. It is possible that revenge attitudes simply manifest themselves in more subtle forms. Perhaps rather than taking direct action, a person seeking revenge will merely allow the Taliban to operate more freely in and around his or her village. This would mean that the Taliban would have more maneuverability and could launch their attacks in areas that were previously peaceful.

Of course revenge is just one of several possible drivers of the spike in violence. The air strike may also be a tipping point for locals who are already frustrated with bad governance and

---

<sup>26</sup> Luke N. Condra, Joseph H. Felter, Radha K. Iyengar, and Jacob N. Shapiro, 2010, *The effect of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq*, No. w16152, National Bureau of Economic Research.

the absence of rule-of-law.<sup>27</sup> It is no secret that the Karzai government was corrupt and inefficient. Weak implementation of justice at the community level and abuse of power was common. The Taliban often set up their own shadow governments and resolve local disputes, branding themselves as the purveyors of justice. The appeal of the Taliban is often nostalgia for an era when the rules were harsh and the punishment brutal but the application of the law was predictable. Families could guarantee their safety as long as they didn't break the Taliban's rules. Counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen wrote in his book *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* that community leaders and local elders seek "survival through certainty," by "attempting to identify consistent rules they can follow in order to keep their people safe."<sup>28</sup> In an era when civilians are the victims of collateral damage in coalition-led night raids and airstrikes, foreign troops and the Karzai administration may already have been seen as poor enforcers of law and order. The mass killing of civilians in a coalition air strike is the ultimate signal to community leaders that they were unable to keep their people safe by aligning with pro-government forces, and the catastrophe may lead to an increase in support for the Taliban. An airstrike that is seen as particularly unjust would be more likely to be the tipping point for locals who are already fed up with the absence of rule-of-law in their area.

Finally, it is possible that the airstrikes lead to an increase in xenophobic or nationalist feeling against foreign troops, which the Taliban can then exploit to mobilize locals.<sup>29</sup> This might be more likely in an area where foreign troops have poor relations with locals. It might also be

---

<sup>27</sup> Giustozzi and Niamatullah, 2012, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> Kilcullen, 2009, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> Giustozzi and Niamatullah, 2012, p. 59.

more likely in cases where insurgents are waging a better information war than pro-government forces in the wake of an airstrike.

To summarize, previous literature identifies several drivers of anti-government violence. First, insurgents may step up their attacks in an effort to prove their resilience. Second, the families of victims may seek revenge. Third, the injustice of the strike may serve as a tipping point which leads locals to seek out the brutal but consistent justice of the Taliban. Fourth, the disaster may lead to increased nationalist and xenophobic sentiment which creates distance between coalition troops and locals and may increase the appeal of the Taliban's nationalistic rhetoric.

Existing public opinion literature also suggests that civilian casualties in Afghanistan lead to an increase in civilian support for the Taliban and a decrease in support for coalition forces. A 2013 study by Lyall, Blair, and Imai shows that civilians in Pashtun-dominated provinces judge casualties caused by international troops more harshly than the casualties caused by the Taliban. Specifically, civilian harm inflicted by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is met with reduced support for ISAF and increased support for the Taliban, but Taliban-inflicted harm does not translate into greater support for ISAF. Notably, the Lyall et. al. study also indicates that post-harm mitigation efforts like distributing aid to the affected families lowers support for the insurgents. This suggests that the increase in support for the Taliban can be mitigated if ISAF pursues a reconciliation process, although international troops would still suffer a decrease in

support. However, the instances of ISAF approaching its victims' families were so low, partly due to the security risk, that results from this part of the study are far from definitive.<sup>30</sup>

These drivers of violence and the role of post-harm mitigation efforts are important to keep in mind when explaining how two mass-casualty airstrikes can result in such different security outcomes.

### **Research Design**

Often in counterinsurgency war, airstrikes are non-random, occurring in areas that already have high levels of insurgent activity, where the Taliban exert considerable control over the local population. In these cases, it is more difficult to identify the effects of the airstrikes on insurgent violence and support for the Taliban, because both were high prior to the strike. For this reason, I have chosen two case studies in provinces that had experienced relatively low levels of violence since the 2001 invasion and had only recently experienced an uptick in insurgent violence. The low Taliban presence in Farah and Kunduz combined with the sheer magnitude of the deaths resulting from each air strike should allow us to see clear before-and-after effects in the local communities. It also allows us to focus on populations that have not already been won over by the Taliban but are instead sitting on the fence. These are the populations, according to classical counterinsurgency theory, which are most critical for the counterinsurgent to win over. Finally, choosing two single, large-scale airstrikes also allows for a more natural comparison between the two provinces.

---

<sup>30</sup> Jason Lyall, Graeme Blair, and Kosuke Imai. 2013. "Explaining support for combatants during wartime: A survey experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review* 107.04: 679-705.

A case study format is limited in that the experiences in the two provinces I have chosen are not necessarily generalizable to the broader conflict in Afghanistan. It is even more difficult to extrapolate the results of this analysis to an outside conflict like the current bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria. However, a more detailed, localized analysis of an individual airstrike should help us imagine how airstrikes today might play out on the ground in different communities.

In order to determine the effects of the airstrikes, I have gathered by own dataset of insurgent violence using news reports obtained through LexisNexis. My dataset allows me to track the scale, complexity, location, target, and victims of each attack that occurred within six months of the strike. The scale of attack was broken into four categories: large-scale attacks, moderate-scale attacks, IED and suicide attacks and other or unknown. These categories are meant to assess approximately how many insurgents were needed to carry out the attack.

Incidents in which there was a prolonged firefight, in which the number of insurgents exceeded 50 or which was explicitly referred to as a “large-scale attack” were classified as large-scale. By contrast, in the case of an IED or suicide attack, only one or two insurgents are needed. Most ambushes were assumed to be moderate-scale, most likely involving around one or two dozen fighters. Any other unique details about the attacks were also noted.

Using the same news reports which I gathered through LexisNexis, I was able to keep track of reactions to the airstrikes and other noteworthy trends in provincial politics which may have affected the security landscape in each case. I have also used interviews with three military personnel and one civilian aid worker who were in Kunduz in 2009 around the time of the airstrike. I was unable to interview anyone from Farah.

Given the unusual scale of these airstrikes, I expected there to be a large increase in violence in both Farah and Kunduz, much larger than the spike in violence predicted following more typical airstrikes. Given how quickly information about a mass-casualty airstrike spreads, I predicted that resentment over the airstrike would be more widespread and that the insurgents would need to prove their resilience to a wider range of people. Therefore, violence would be less localized. I expected the scale and complexity of the attacks to increase if the insurgents gained extra recruits after the strike. I also expected that targets might shift toward foreign forces if the violence was driven by revenge attitudes. If the violence was driven by resilience attitudes, I expected that insurgents might choose easier targets. All in all, the results of my security analyses showed much less change than I had anticipated and did not always follow the trends that I predicted.

## **CHAPTER II: FARAH PROVINCE**

### **Provincial Background**

Farah Province is located in the Southwest, bordered by Herat, Ghor, Helmand, Nimroz and Iran. Though it is one of the largest provinces in Afghanistan, its population is widely dispersed and mainly located in rural districts. In 2009, its population was 925,016, about 93% of which resided in rural areas.<sup>31</sup> Most citizens worked in agriculture or as herders. Some owned small businesses. Only about 15% were literate. About 10% of the population had access to electricity. Almost half had access to potable water. It was also largely Pashtun. Its citizens were

---

<sup>31</sup> "[Province: Farah.](#)" *Program for Culture & Conflict Studies*. [Naval Postgraduate School](#)(NPS). February 3, 2009.

about 80% Pashtun and about 14% Tajik. The vast majority were Sunni Muslims (95%) with a small minority of Shi'ites (5%). The main tribal groups were the Pashtun tribes Alizai, Barakzai and Nurzai; Baluch; the historically-oppressed Hazara; the largely nomadic tribe Aimak; and Taimuri.<sup>32</sup> Poppy was the most important crop in Farah. Cultivation doubled between 2006 and 2007, making poppy the number one crop grown in the province.<sup>33</sup> The Taliban were funded in part by powerful local drug lords.<sup>34</sup> By 2009, local Taliban pressure and the government-led poppy eradication campaign had pushed Farah residents increasingly into the arms of the insurgency.<sup>35</sup>

## Security

In 2001, the Taliban withdrew from Farah due to heavy coalition bombing. Since then, Farah had experienced a low level of conflict relative to other provinces in Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> However, there was a spike in violence starting around September 2006, when insurgents from western Kandahar fled to Helmand and Farah following Operation Medusa. That violence picked up through 2007 and 2008. Taliban fighters used roadside bombs, ambushes, suicide bombing, large assaults and kidnapping to target mainly Afghan National Police, district centers, and

---

<sup>32</sup> "[Province: Farah.](#)" p.1

<sup>33</sup> "Farah Province," *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS - Home*, The Naval Postgraduate School, 3 February 2009, Web, 20 March 2015.

<sup>34</sup> "Afghan paper details Taleban drug routes," Cheragh, May 22, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> "Farah Province."

<sup>36</sup> "11-16 - Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook: Farah Province," United States Army Combined Arms Center, February 2011, Web, 20 March 2015, p. 7.

foreign workers.<sup>37</sup> The main highway in Afghanistan, known as Ring Road or Highway 1, runs from Kabul to Kandahar and cuts directly through Farah. That highway has been a hot spot of insurgent violence. By 2008, the United Nations reported that none of the districts in the province were accessible by road due to the high level of criminal and insurgent activity throughout the province. Insurgent activity tended to be concentrated in the Bakwa, Gulistan, Bala Baluk and Khaki-Safed districts.<sup>38</sup>

In 2009, there were 1,600 ISAF soldiers stationed in Farah, largely composed of U.S., Spanish, and Italian troops.<sup>39</sup> The Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police were also stationed in Farah. One of the four Provincial Reconstruction Teams located in Regional Command West was located in Farah City and run by the United States.<sup>40</sup>

Leading up to the Granai airstrike, Farah had already experienced several prominent instances of civilian casualties and friendly fire, each of which were carried out by airstrikes. In 2008, nine Afghan police were killed in an airstrike. The ANP and ISAF forces reportedly had been engaged in a firefight, each thinking that the other were Taliban militants, when international troops called in airstrikes on the police post.<sup>41</sup> Just four days before, nine civilians

---

<sup>37</sup> ["Province: Farah,"](#) p.7

<sup>38</sup> "Farah Province."

<sup>39</sup> ["Province: Farah,"](#) p.7

<sup>40</sup> "Regional Command West," *Understandingwar.org*, Institute for the Study of War, n.d., Web, 23 March 2015.

<sup>41</sup> "Airstrike kills nine Afghan police mistaken for Taliban," *The Irish Times*, July 21, 2008.

were killed in a bombing raid in Bakwa district.<sup>42</sup> By December 2008, members of the Provincial Council of Farah were already denouncing the civilian casualties caused by foreign troops.<sup>43</sup>

Presumably, security improved over the next month. In January, the governor of Farah declared that the insurgents in Bala Baluk, Posht Rod and Khak-e-Safed districts no longer posed a threat to government control. However, Tolo TV, based in Kabul, reported that residents still felt their province was insecure.<sup>44</sup> In the lead-up to the airstrike, since the beginning of 2009, security had once again been deteriorating, particularly in the more rural areas.<sup>45</sup> During this time, the NATO presence in Farah was relatively small compared to some of the more volatile regions in Afghanistan. According to the *International Herald Tribune*, when the airstrike occurred in the spring of 2009, Farah had almost no foreign military presence except for a small number of special forces and embedded mentors with the Afghan police and army.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Airstrike**

Though commonly referred to as the “Granai airstrike” or the “Granai massacre,” the bombing actually took place in three villages—Granai, Gangabad and Koujaha, just off the main

---

<sup>42</sup> Afghan Islamic Press news agency, July 16, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> “Officials say dispatch of additional forces to Afghanistan ineffective,” Afghan Islamic Press news agency, December 28, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> “Afghan police official questions ‘free’ insurgent movement across Iranian border,” Tolo TV, January 10, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Ethan McNern, “US military’s top man in Afghanistan out after less than a year,” *Scotsman*, 12 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>46</sup> Carlotta Gall and Taimoor Shah, “Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds,” *The International Herald Tribune*, 15 May 2009, News, p. 1, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

road.<sup>47</sup> On May 4, 2009, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) received a report that approximately 300 Taliban fighters were amassed near Granai village in Bala Baluk district and were threatening civilians. According to the district police chief, insurgents had been harassing villagers, forcing them to pay taxes on poppy crops.<sup>48</sup> *The Guardian* reported: “The villagers of Granai and Gangabad had just finished their breakfast when the Taliban came to their town to collect a so-called tax on the area's poppy farmers.”<sup>49</sup> The Taliban were traditionally strong in the area and eyewitnesses reported that the police and soldiers waiting around the villages were worried.<sup>50</sup> *The International Herald Tribune* wrote that the Taliban wished to exploit the thin presence of security forces and seize control of Granai.<sup>51</sup> Fighting broke out in the morning when hundreds of Taliban ambushed local police checkpoints, killing three policemen and wounding three others.<sup>52</sup> The Taliban subsequently took over a fortress near the hamlet of Granai

---

<sup>47</sup> Patrick Cockburn, “Afghans riot over air-strike atrocity; Witnesses say deaths of 147 people in three villages came after a sustained bombardment by American aircraft,” *The Independent* (London), 8 May 2009, World, p. 20, LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>48</sup> “US air strikes kill dozens of Afghan civilians,” *Guardian.com*, 6 May 2009, LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>49</sup> Jon Boone, “Region in crisis: The victims: ‘Neither the army nor police gave us a chance to escape,’” *The Guardian*, London, 7 May 2009, Guardian International Pages, p. 17, LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>50</sup> Cockburn, “Afghans riot over air-strike atrocity; Witnesses say deaths of 147 people in three villages came after a sustained bombardment by American aircraft.”

<sup>51</sup> Gall and Shah, “Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds.”

<sup>52</sup> Taimoor Shah and Carlotta Gall, “Afghans Say U.S. Raids Killed 30 Civilians,” *The New York Times*, 6 May 2009, Section A, Column 0, Foreign Desk, p. 12, LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

and occupied high ground in an adjacent village.<sup>53</sup> ANSF sent a team of about 200, accompanied by coalition advisors, to clear the area. Around 12:30 p.m., they began engaging in what would become an hours-long battle. Eventually, the ANSF and their coalition advisors called for close air support. Four fighter jets arrived and dropped flares as a show of force. They then engaged in a series of strafing runs followed by four bombing runs targeting the Taliban's front line.

Just before 7:00 p.m., the fighter jets were replaced with B-1B bombers. However, villagers say that, by this time, the shooting had died down and the Taliban were slipping away. The fighting had eased so much that many local men went to say their evening prayers at a nearby mosque at 7:00 p.m. After they had headed home, as they were preparing to eat, the mosque was bombed, followed by two compounds. Although some residents were adamant that the Taliban were long gone by the time the bombs were dropped,<sup>54</sup> the police chief said they were probably there until 1:00 am. In any case, planes released several waves of bombs after 8:00 p.m., when most of the villagers thought the fighting was over.<sup>55</sup> Abdul Mohammad, 35, a resident of Granai, recalled: "It was eight in the evening when the fighting between the government and the Taliban stopped. We thought it was over. But an hour later we heard the drone of the airplanes. I became very nervous and told everyone in my family to get out of the house. There were Taliban around, but when they heard the noise of the planes, they escaped." In Farah, there is a tradition of seeking shelter with local leaders in times of danger. Many women,

---

<sup>53</sup> Jason Motlagh, "The Bombing at Bala Baluk," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 1 April 2010, Web, 28 March 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Motlagh, "The Bombing at Bala Baluk."

<sup>55</sup> Gall and Shah, "Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds."

children, and elderly people were herded into the compound belonging to the village elders, three miles from the scene of the fighting, where they thought they would be safe.<sup>56</sup> It was these compounds that were bombed by the American planes.<sup>57</sup> The executive summary of the investigation into to Granai airstrike justified the attack, stating that the bombers were targeting what looked like a group of adults moving in a “tactical manner,” meaning that their movements seemed to correspond with Taliban commander instructions to fighters.<sup>58</sup> Most of the people in the compounds were killed.

The blast ripped people to shreds, making it difficult to identify the dead. Jamal, an elderly man who lost two sons and a daughter in the bombing, described the scene to the *International Herald Tribune*: “There was someone's legs, someone's shoulders, someone's hands. The dead were so many,” he said shaking his head.<sup>59</sup> Another villager, Sayed Ghusuldin Agha, told the *New York Times* that body parts littered the landscape. “It would scare a man if he saw it in a dream,” he said.<sup>60</sup> Families from the villages began digging in the ruins for the

---

<sup>56</sup> Patrick Cockburn, “‘120 die’ as US bombs village; Afghan outrage after strike targeting Taliban fighters hits women and children Clinton expresses ‘deep regret,’” *The Independent* (London), 7 May 2009, News, p. 20, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>57</sup> Shapoor Saber, Fetrat Zerak and Abaceen Nasimi, “Air strike on Afghanistan -- an eyewitness account,” *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas), Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune News Service, 11 June 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>58</sup> Executive Summary: U.S. Central Command Directed Investigation into Civilian Casualties in Farah Province, Afghanistan on 4 May, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Gall and Shah, “Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds.”

<sup>60</sup> Taimoor Shah and Carlotta Gall, “Civilian Deaths Imperil Support For Afghan War,” *The New York Times*, 7 May 2009, Section A, Column 0, Foreign Desk, p. 1, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

remains of their loved ones.<sup>61</sup> Although the government has asked villagers not to bury the dead until investigators arrived,<sup>62</sup> the rapid mass burial of the victims made the investigations into the exact number of civilian casualties more difficult.<sup>63</sup> The Red Cross was the first to arrive of the scene and to confirm that the bombing had killed civilians. A spokeswoman for the Red Cross, Jessica Barry, subsequently placed the blame squarely on the U.S. air raid at a time when many were still blaming the Taliban for using civilians as human shields.<sup>64</sup> Barry said of the strike: “It’s not the first time [but] really this is one of the very serious and biggest incidents for a very long time.”<sup>65</sup>

Reports emerged in the aftermath of the strike of victims with strange burns which they believed were caused by white phosphorous. In response, the Taliban and the U.S. military each suggested that the other had used the chemical weapon. However, an investigation later concluded that white phosphorous had not been used.

---

<sup>61</sup> Cockburn, “‘120 die’ as US bombs village; Afghan outrage after strike targeting Taliban fighters hits women and children Clinton expresses ‘deep regret.’”

<sup>62</sup> Cockburn, “‘120 die’ as US bombs village; Afghan outrage after strike targeting Taliban fighters hits women and children Clinton expresses ‘deep regret.’”

<sup>63</sup> Gall and Shah, “Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds.”

<sup>64</sup> Taimoor Shah and Carlotta Gall, “Air raids kill scores of Afghan villagers; Local official puts toll at about 100 civilians; Red Cross blames U.S.” *The International Herald Tribune*, 7 May 2009, News, p. 8, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>65</sup> Taimoor Shah and Carlotta Gall, “Red Cross confirms civilian Afghan deaths,” *The International Herald Tribune*, 7 May 2009, News, p. 4, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

In the end, the United States estimated that there were at least 26 civilian casualties. The United Nations put the death toll at 64. Karzai's investigators concluded that there were 140 civilian deaths. Some villagers said that up to 200 were killed.

There was much speculation that the airstrike would have major repercussions in Farah, specifically that it would strengthen the Taliban in the area. *The Independent* warned: "The killing of so many Afghan civilians by U.S. aircraft is likely to infuriate Afghans and lead to an increase in support for the Taliban in the bombed area." The article cited opinion polls in Afghanistan which show that support for the Taliban rises in provinces where bombing and shelling kills innocent people.<sup>66</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* wrote: "The more civilians are killed in the coalition's attempts to combat the Taliban-inspired insurgency, the more support grows for the militants' cause."<sup>67</sup> As we shall see, there was considerable backlash against foreign forces. However, whether the Taliban gained any meaningful strength from the airstrike is less clear.

### **The Reaction**

Below, I have detailed the responses of different actors to the Granai strike. Overall, there was a wave of political backlash to the airstrike, both on the local and national level. In a powerful demonstration of the death toll caused by the airstrike, villagers immediately drove piles of corpses in trucks to the provincial capital to show the governor. There were riots in

---

<sup>66</sup> Cockburn, "'120 die' as US bombs village; Afghan outrage after strike targeting Taliban fighters hits women and children Clinton expresses 'deep regret.'"

<sup>67</sup> Con Coughlin, "This uneasy alliance may be our only hope in the war on terror; Getting Afghanistan and Pakistan to work together is vital for Obama," *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 8 May 2009, Features, Comment, p. 28, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Farah, student protests in Kabul and dissent in Parliament. Members of Parliament called for legislation to regulate foreign forces. Numerous editorials condemned the airstrike and supported Parliament's efforts. Karzai called on Obama to halt the use of airstrikes in Afghanistan altogether, calling them an ineffective tool for fighting insurgents. The reaction from U.S. officials, though better than in the past, still suggested that the American military was not being fully transparent. There was considerable disagreement between U.S. and Afghan officials over how many civilians were killed. U.S. military officials also attempted to shift the blame onto the Taliban for deliberately using civilians as human shields. After I outline the immediate reactions of key actors, I will provide a security analysis of Taliban-initiated violence in Farah.

## **U.S. and NATO**

The U.S. response was set in motion quickly after the airstrike. On May 5, the day after the bombing, the top US spokesman in Afghanistan Colonel Greg Julian confirmed that the strike had taken place and promised that an investigation would soon be underway, although he could not say if there had been civilian deaths.<sup>68</sup> He told the press, "Once we get eyes on the ground we will have a better idea of what may have happened." The investigation would be conducted jointly with the Afghan government.<sup>69</sup> U.S. National Security Adviser Jim Jones pledged that the

---

<sup>68</sup> "US raid 'kills Afghan civilians,'" *Aljazeera.net*, 5 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>69</sup> "US to investigate Afghan deaths," *Aljazeera.net*, 6 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

investigation would be pursued “aggressively.”<sup>70</sup> The next day, U.S. and Afghan fact-finders visited the site of the bombing.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time, the U.S. military was clearly not ready to accept full responsibility for the airstrike. Early on, attempts were made to shift the blame into the Taliban or even the Afghan National Army. A spokesman for the U.S. forces in Afghanistan Captain Elizabeth Mathias was quick to point out that the strike had been requested by an Afghan unit while under fire: "This was not coalition forces. This was Afghan National Security Forces who called in close air support, a decision that was vetted by the Afghan leadership." *The Guardian* accused the U.S. military of rushing to “pin the blame” on the ANA<sup>72</sup> and ANP.<sup>73</sup> In fact, it was a U.S. special forces officer embedded with the Afghan forces who ultimately called the the airstrike.<sup>74</sup>

Some in the U.S. military also told press that they were exploring the possibility, based on the accounts of witnesses, that the Taliban had killed some of the civilians with grenades and then driven their bodies around in trucks claiming that they had been killed by American forces.<sup>75</sup> U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates expressed regrets for any civilian deaths but

---

<sup>70</sup> “‘Up to 100 dead’ in US-Afghan raid,” *Aljazeera.net*, 7 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>71</sup> Ewen MacAskill Washington, “Dozens of Afghans killed in US air raid: Final death toll could be worst since 2001 invasion: Inquiry promise as Obama meets Karzai and Zardari,” *The Guardian*, 6 May 2009, p. 19, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>72</sup> Afghan National Army

<sup>73</sup> Afghan National Police

<sup>74</sup> “US air strikes kill dozens of Afghan civilians.”

<sup>75</sup> Margaret Talev And Warren P. Strobel, “Obama pledges 'lasting commitment' to Pakistan, Afghanistan,” Knight Ridder Washington Bureau, distributed by McClatchy-Tribune News Service, 6 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

also said that he had heard reports of the Taliban throwing grenades into Bala Baluk houses in order to blame U.S. forces for their deaths. “We all know that the Taliban use civilian casualties and sometimes create them, to create problems for the United States and our coalition partners,” he said. “We will have to wait and see what happened in this particular case.” General David McKiernan, commander of ISAF, also acknowledged reports of civilian deaths but hinted that the U.S. military was not to blame: “We have some other information that leads us to distinctly different conclusions about the cause of the civilian casualties.”<sup>76</sup> One Pentagon official in Washington later told the *New York Times* that reports of Taliban attacking Bala Baluk homes were “thinly sourced,” meaning he doubted their validity.<sup>77</sup> Residents of Bala Boluk told Tolo TV that the Taliban had not thrown grenades at civilians.<sup>78</sup>

While the investigators were probing the site of the bombing, the leaders of the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan were meeting in Washington, D.C. Karzai was there when the bombing took place. In a one-on-one meeting with Karzai, Obama expressed his condolences for the loss of lives in Farah.<sup>79</sup> He vowed to “make every effort” to prevent civilian casualties as

---

<sup>76</sup> “Afghans protest over Farah deaths,” *Aljazeera.net*, 7 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>77</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller and Carlotta Gall, “Officials Say U.S. Raids Killed Some Afghan Civilians,” *The New York Times*, 8 May 2009, Section A, Column 0, Foreign Desk, p. 4, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>78</sup> “Afghan rights body blames both Taleban, foreign forces for civilian deaths,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 17 May 2009, Text of report by Afghan independent Tolo TV on 16 May, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>79</sup> Talev and Strobel, “Obama pledges 'lasting commitment' to Pakistan, Afghanistan.”

NATO forces ramped up their campaign in Afghanistan.<sup>80</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the Obama administration “deeply, deeply” regretted the loss of innocent life.<sup>81</sup> However, both Obama and Clinton stopped short of accepting U.S. blame for the deaths in Farah.<sup>82</sup>

On May 8, four days after the airstrike, the United States confirmed for the first time that, based on its investigation, it was responsible for the deaths of Afghan civilians. However, Colonel Julien rejected the Afghan police claim that around 70 civilians had died, saying that number was “grossly exaggerated.”<sup>83</sup> That number ended up being close to what the United Nations would estimate as the final civilian death toll.

Several days later, the United States denied Karzai’s call to halt the use of airstrikes. Retired Gen. James Jones famously said that the United States would not rule out airstrikes as a tool in counterinsurgency because “we can’t fight with one hand tied behind our back.”<sup>84</sup> This quote was later repeated in editorials calling for the regulation of foreign troops and in Taliban propaganda. Around this same time, the United States was rejecting claims that it had used white phosphorus in the attacks, suggesting that it was the Taliban instead.

On May 12, about a week after the airstrike, it was reported that Stanley McChrystal would replace David McKiernan as commander of U.S. and ISAF troops. The Pentagon stated

---

<sup>80</sup> “US ‘regrets’ Afghan deaths,” *Aljazeera.net*, 7 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>81</sup> “‘Up to 100 dead’ in US-Afghan raid,” *Aljazeera.net*, 7 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>82</sup> “US ‘regrets’ Afghan deaths,” *Aljazeera.net*.

<sup>83</sup> “US probe ‘confirms’ Afghan deaths,” *Aljazeera.net*, 8 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>84</sup> “Obama adviser: U.S. will not end Afghan airstrikes,” *Daily Camera* (Boulder, Colorado), 11 May 2009, Section A: *Daily Camera*, p. 3, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

that “new thinking” was needed.<sup>85</sup> However, defense officials said the dismissal of McKiernan was unrelated to the Granai airstrike.<sup>86</sup>

Around May 20, about two weeks after the airstrike, the new American ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry met face-to-face with Afghan survivors of the bombing, in what was the most direct effort to apologize and make amends with the victims. Eikenberry promised that coalition forces would change their tactics in order to prevent civilian casualties and called the May 4 airstrike a tragedy: “I assure the people of Afghanistan that the United States will work tirelessly with your government, army and police to find ways to reduce the price paid by civilians, and avoid tragedies like what occurred in Bala Baluk. As U.S. ambassador, and with my previous experience as a soldier, I make this a solemn pledge.”<sup>87</sup>

On May 21, the United States released for the first time its estimate of civilian casualties, which was around 20 to 30. The U.S. military again rejected Afghan government claims that 140 civilians died. It wasn’t until early June, one month after the airstrike, that it was reported that the American personnel who carried out the airstrike did not follow all the rules designed to prevent civilian casualties. For example, after being cleared to attack Taliban fighters, one of the aircraft had to circle around and did not reconfirm that there were no civilians in the area before

---

<sup>85</sup> Mike Blanchfield, “New thinking’ needed, U.S. fires top soldier in Afghanistan; Experienced general replaced by one with cloak-and-dagger talents,” *Edmonton Journal* (Alberta), 12 May 2009, News, p. A4, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>86</sup> Eric Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti, “Switch Signals New Path for Afghan War,” *The New York Times*, 13 May 2009, Section A, Column 0, Foreign Desk, p. 12, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>87</sup> Carlotta Gall, “U.S. envoy vows to limit air casualties,” *The International Herald Tribune*, 20 May 2009, News, p. 5, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

it dropped its bombs. Another aircraft struck a compound of buildings in violation of the stipulation that high-density village dwellings were off-limits.<sup>88</sup>

The results of the investigation were never released in their entirety and no disciplinary action was ever taken against those responsible for the airstrike. However, the executive summary of the investigation was made public. The fact-finders concluded that approximately 26 civilians had been killed, although they did not discount the possibility that there were more deaths which could not be verified. Additionally, a new tactical directive was released on July 2 limiting the use of airstrikes on residential compounds to instances of self-defense when all other options have been exhausted. The directive instructed troops to exercise great caution in their use of airstrikes lest they alienate the population.<sup>89</sup>

Overall, the U.S. response to the airstrike was not as transparent as it could have been, and many noted that the American military was denying full responsibility. Although the United States responded quickly to the airstrike and immediately called for an investigation, it also repeatedly attempted to shift the blame onto the Taliban or the Afghan security forces who called in the strike. The U.S. military also withheld the full results of its investigation. ISAF repeatedly clashed with the Afghan government over the number of civilians killed in the strike. However, with the release of Stanley McChrystal's new tactical directive, the military did seem to take meaningful steps to ensure that this type of incident would not happen again. Of course, four months later, there would be another mass-casualty airstrike in Kunduz. Additionally, in

---

<sup>88</sup> Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "U.S. inquiry faults Afghan airstrikes; Airmen failed to follow rules in civilian bombing, military concludes," *The International Herald Tribune*, 3 June 2009, News, p. 1, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>89</sup> International Security Assistance Force Headquarters, "Tactical Directive," 6 July 2009, Kabul, Afghanistan.

evaluating the U.S. response, it is important to keep in mind that it is unclear how much local civilians in Farah paid attention to the reactions that were playing out on the international stage.

### **Karzai Administration**

Karzai was in Washington, D.C. at the time that the airstrike occurred meeting with his American and Pakistani counterparts. He subsequently used the meeting as a platform to discuss the use of airstrikes in Afghanistan, his comments growing more critical over time. The day after the airstrike, Karzai called on the United States to exercise restraint in bombing areas where civilians might be at risk: “This war against terrorism will succeed only if we fight it from a higher platform of morality.”<sup>90</sup> He called the civilian deaths “unjustifiable and unacceptable” and promised to raise the issue at the White House.<sup>91</sup> In the meantime, he thanked Hillary Clinton for her words of condolence and said he hoped the United States and Afghanistan could work together to reduce the toll on civilians in the fight against terrorism.<sup>92</sup> On May 7, he sent a joint U.S.-Afghan delegation to investigate the incident.<sup>93</sup> In an interview with CNN, Karzai used stronger language. He declared, “The airstrikes are not acceptable. This is something that we've raised in the Afghan government very clearly, that terrorism is not in the Afghan villages, not in

---

<sup>90</sup> Washington, “Dozens of Afghans killed in US air raid: Final death toll could be worst since 2001 invasion: Inquiry promise as Obama meets Karzai and Zardari.”

<sup>91</sup> “US air strikes kill dozens of Afghan civilians.”

<sup>92</sup> “‘Up to 100 dead’ in US-Afghan raid,” *Aljazeera.net*, 7 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>93</sup> Cockburn, “‘120 die’ as US bombs village; Afghan outrage after strike targeting Taliban fighters hits women and children Clinton expresses ‘deep regret.’”

Afghan homes. And you cannot defeat terrorists by airstrikes."<sup>94</sup> Karzai demanded an end to U.S. airstrikes. He also specifically blamed the bombings for the civilian deaths, which he said could be over 100: "I got definitive word from the government this morning that there were more than 100 casualties—nearly 125 to 130 civilians lost. Deaths—children, women, and men—and it was done by the bombings."<sup>95</sup> In late May, Karzai held a town hall meeting in Farah, during which he told the attendants that he had repeatedly called for an end to the bombing of Afghan villages and raids on Afghan houses and had finally reached an agreement with the U.S. government to limit airstrikes.<sup>96</sup> He also ordered that families of victims of the May 4 airstrike be paid \$2,000 for the dead and \$1,000 for the wounded.<sup>97</sup> The Afghan government probe eventually found that 140 civilians had died in the bombing.<sup>98</sup>

## **The Taliban**

I was unable to speak with anyone on the ground in Farah who could tell me what local Taliban cells were doing in the aftermath of the airstrike to spread the word about the bombing.

---

<sup>94</sup> Nancy A. Youssef, "U.S. says airstrike killed 50 Afghans, most of them insurgents," *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune News Service, 8 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>95</sup> "Karzai demands US air strikes end," *Aljazeera.net*, 8 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>96</sup> Gall, "U.S. envoy vows to limit air casualties."

<sup>97</sup> "Afghan death toll unclear; Afghan official says 95 children killed in U. S.-Taliban battle," *The Times & Transcript* (New Brunswick), 14 May 2009, News, p. C11, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>98</sup> "US plays down Farah raid death toll," *Aljazeera.net*, 20 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

However, it is clear that, on a national level, the Taliban were active in posting on the Voice of Jihad website and speaking with the media.

The Taliban posted a response to the airstrike on the Voice of Jihad website on May 5, the day after the strike. The post accused the American forces of acting out of revenge and estimated civilian deaths at more than 30. The Taliban said that witnesses of the airstrike confirmed that those who died were civilians, not Taliban.<sup>99</sup> The next day, another post said that American forces had “heavily and savagely” bombed Ganjabad and Granai villages. This time, the post alleged that 150 innocent people had been killed. “According to a report, the American forces in the area carried out a savage bombardment of the civilians in revenge for an extensive attack by the mojahedin on their joint military and supply convoys in the area,” it said.<sup>100</sup> In response to rumors that white phosphorous was used, Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi pointed his finger at U.S. forces, telling Afghan Islamic Press: “Neither do the Taleban have the chemical phosphorus, nor have they used it or known the method of its usage, so whatever happened in this regard has been carried out by the U.S. forces.” He added: “Nowadays Afghanistan serves as an experimental lab for U.S. weapons; they test every type of their weapons and the Afghan

---

<sup>99</sup> “Taleban accuse US forces of killing more than 30 civilians in Afghan west,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 5 May 2009, Text of report by Afghan Taleban Voice of Jihad website on 5 May, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>100</sup> “Taleban say 150 civilians killed or wounded in Afghan bombing,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 6 May 2009, Text of report “The number of civilian casualties as a result of savage bombardment by the American forces has reached 150” by Afghan Taleban Voice of Jihad website on 6 May, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

government does not have the authority to ban the use of these weapons.”<sup>101</sup> He called the accusation that the Taliban had used villagers as human shields “baseless” and suggested that by building their bases close to residential areas, the NATO forces were also using Afghan civilians as shields from Taliban attacks.<sup>102</sup> Another post on May 12 called for an independent investigation into the claims that white phosphorous had been used against Afghan civilians: “As operations by the mojahedin have currently increased in various parts of the country and as the enemy suffers heavy casualties on a daily basis, they carry out revenge attacks and bombings and target civilians every day, destroy villages and homes and ruthlessly martyr women, children and defenseless human beings using a variety of chemical and non-chemical weapons.”<sup>103</sup> Later that month, the Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission found in their investigation no evidence that white phosphorous had been used.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> “Taliban deny using phosphorus in Afghan west,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 11 May 2009, Excerpt from report by private Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>102</sup> “Taliban deny using phosphorus in Afghan west,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring.

<sup>103</sup> “Taliban call for independent probe into use of white phosphorous in Afghanistan,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 12 May 2009, Text of "Statement by Islamic Emirate regarding the use of phosphorous", posted on Afghan Taliban Voice of Jihad website on 12 May, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>104</sup> “Afghan daily calls for compensation for victims of foreign forces' operations,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 28 May 2009, Text of editorial, "Investigating Balabok incident", published by Afghan newspaper Daily Afghanistan, part of the Afghanistan newspaper group, on 27 May, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

However, national-level propaganda may have less of an effect on local civilians than local Taliban propaganda. This is especially true in isolated rural areas. Because I was unable to speak to anyone in Farah, I do not know how local Taliban cells reacted to the airstrike.

## **Parliament**

Afghan lawmakers were vocal in their condemnation of the Granai airstrike. Members of Parliament immediately called for the regulation of foreign forces in order to minimize future civilian casualties. Just a couple days after the airstrike, chairman of Parliament, Yunus Qanooni, called on the government to draft a new agreement for the foreign forces in Afghanistan and present it to Parliament within a week.<sup>105</sup> Members of Parliament (MPs) also boycotted their parliamentary sessions to protest the incident. One MP told National Afghanistan TV: “We can no longer remain silent as the system's legitimacy will be called into question. I am very concerned about such repeated tragedies...I am sure they [foreign forces] have technical capability to attack their targets, so I have to say that the killing of such a large number of civilians could be another political game.” MP Hajji Farid warned of a revolution if the presence of foreign forces was not regulated.<sup>106</sup>

Afghan newspapers were generally supportive of the protests in Parliament. A number of editorials were published in support of the regulation of foreign forces. On May 9, pro-government Afghan newspaper Weesa published an editorial in Pashto titled "How can foreign

---

<sup>105</sup> Shah and Gall, “Civilian Deaths Imperil Support For Afghan War.”

<sup>106</sup> “Afghan MPs call for legalizing foreign forces' presence,” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 8 May 2009, Text of report by state-owned National Afghanistan TV on 8 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

forces be put on legal footing?" The article said: "NATO and coalition forces commit any kind of crime in Afghanistan because they are immune to prosecution. Civilian casualties and irresponsible operations will continue as long as they are immune to prosecution. If they are allowed to carry out such irresponsible acts, many peaceful areas will become volatile."<sup>107</sup> On May 12, state-owned Afghan newspaper Hewad published an article titled "Banning foreign military bombing raids is people's only main demand," which asked, "How long these foreign forces will continue to be rogue? How long will these forces be present in Afghanistan?"<sup>108</sup>

In mid-May, one Afghan legislator alleged that 95 children, meaning under the age of 18, had been killed in the airstrike. U.S. immediately dismissed the claim.<sup>109</sup>

Overall, Parliament was especially vocal after the Granai airstrike, with members calling for the regulation of foreign forces, boycotting parliamentary sessions and denouncing the airstrike in the press.

---

<sup>107</sup> "Afghan daily stresses need to legalize presence of foreign forces," *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 10 May 2009, Text of editorial in Pashto, "How can foreign forces be put on legal footing?", published by pro-government Afghan newspaper Weesa on 9 May, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>108</sup> "Afghan daily calls for end to foreign military bombing raids," *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 14 May 2009, Excerpt from article by Harun entitled: "Banning foreign military bombing raids is people's only main demand" by state-owned Afghan newspaper Hewad on 12 May, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>109</sup> "Afghan death toll unclear; Afghan official says 95 children killed in U. S.-Taliban battle," *The Times & Transcript* (New Brunswick), 14 May 2009, News, p. C11, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

## Local Farah Officials

Estimates of civilians deaths coming from local government officials were much higher than the American estimates. The day after the airstrike, Aljazeera reported that Afghan officials were estimating that 50 civilians had been killed in the bombing. Farah's provincial police chief said that more than 25 Taliban had been killed, but he could not confirm the reports of civilian casualties.<sup>110</sup> The following day, *The Guardian* reported that Rohul Amin, the governor of Farah province, feared that 100 civilians had been killed. He said he would send a government delegation to investigate the number of civilian casualties. "We don't know the exact numbers of the civilian casualties; it is a densely populated area where the fighting broke out," he said. Amin asked tribal elders to investigate the bombing site, because the area was too full of the Taliban for government officials to go there.<sup>111</sup> A couple of days after the airstrike, he told the national Parliament in a phone call played on a loudspeaker that about 100 civilians had been killed.<sup>112</sup>

Provincial police chief, Abdul Ghafar Watandar said that the airstrikes killed about 120 civilians and destroyed 17 houses, though he admitted the estimate was imprecise. Some local officials claimed the death toll could be up to 200.<sup>113</sup> Abdul Rauf Ahmadi, the police spokesman for western Afghanistan said that up to 30 of those killed in the strike were suspected Taliban fighters and the rest were civilians, including children, women, and elderly people.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> "US raid 'kills Afghan civilians,'" *Aljazeera.net*.

<sup>111</sup> Shah and Gall, "Afghans Say U.S. Raids Killed 30 Civilians."

<sup>112</sup> Shah and Gall, "Air raids kill scores of Afghan villagers; Local official puts toll at about 100 civilians; Red Cross blames U.S."

<sup>113</sup> "US air strikes kill dozens of Afghan civilians."

<sup>114</sup> "Afghans protest over Farah deaths," *Aljazeera.net*.

## Local Farah People

Local civilians, even outside the area that was bombed, were also vocal in their denouncement of the strike. Following the battle, villagers transported 30 dead bodies in trucks to the office of the governor of Farah province to prove that the bombing had caused civilian deaths.<sup>115</sup> Many media outlets acknowledged the anger concentrated in the area that had been bombed. *The New York Times* described the villagers as “enraged.”<sup>116</sup> Based on an interview with a local farmer Muhammad Jan, the reporters said that locals “crazed with grief, were collecting mangled bodies in blankets and shawls and piling them on three tractors.”<sup>117</sup> Locals estimated the death toll was between 70 and 100.<sup>118</sup> Village elder Hajji Issa Khan used his tractor to carry the corpses to a central location where the dead could be mourned and buried. “In this operation there were 127 people killed,” he said. “I can tell you exactly because my driver was carrying those...people to the centre of the town and he came and told me that he carried 127 people.” Some locals put the death toll as high as 200.<sup>119</sup>

However, the anger was not limited to those whose immediate family were killed in the strike. On May 7, thousands of villagers staged an angry protest outside government offices in the provincial capital. The riot erupted after villagers from the three villages hit by the airstrike transported 15 new bodies to the house of the governor. *The Independent* described the scene:

---

<sup>115</sup> Sharafuddin Sharafyar, “Cargo of corpses delivered as proof of Afghan civilian deaths in U.S. air raids,” *The Toronto Star*, Reuters News Agency, 6 May 2009, News; p. A06, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>116</sup> Shah and Gall, “Afghans Say U.S. Raids Killed 30 Civilians.”

<sup>117</sup> Shah and Gall, “Civilian Deaths Imperil Support For Afghan War.”

<sup>118</sup> Shah and Gall, “Afghans Say U.S. Raids Killed 30 Civilians.”

<sup>119</sup> Boone, “Region in crisis: The victims: 'Neither the army nor police gave us a chance to escape.’”

“Shouting ‘Death to America’ and ‘Death to the Government,’ thousands of Afghan villagers hurled stones at police yesterday as they vented their fury at American airstrikes that local officials claim killed 147 civilians.”<sup>120</sup> The protesters demanded that American forces leave the country.<sup>121</sup> Police opened fire on the crowd, leaving four protesters wounded. Local shopkeepers closed their businesses, vowing not to reopen them until there was an investigation into the incident.<sup>122</sup>

Said Malham, whose daughter was wounded in the bombing, blamed the NATO forces. “The foreigners are guilty,” he said. “Why don't they bomb their targets, but instead they come and bomb our houses?”<sup>123</sup> Abdul Manaan felt trapped in the middle of the Taliban and pro-government forces: “What can we do? We cannot stand up to either the government or the Taliban. Both sides have guns, and both sides use us as shields. What have we done that we should be the ones getting killed?”<sup>124</sup> Haji Issa Khan, a tribal elder, warned that the strike would only help the Taliban and hurt the Americans: “We told the Americans all these problems are of their own making. They are helping the government but they are helping the Taliban as well with

---

<sup>120</sup> Cockburn, “Afghans riot over air-strike atrocity; Witnesses say deaths of 147 people in three villages came after a sustained bombardment by American aircraft.”

<sup>121</sup> Bumiller and Gall, “Officials Say U.S. Raids Killed Some Afghan Civilians.”

<sup>122</sup> Cockburn, “Afghans riot over air-strike atrocity; Witnesses say deaths of 147 people in three villages came after a sustained bombardment by American aircraft.”

<sup>123</sup> Gall and Shah, “Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds.”

<sup>124</sup> Saber, Zerak and Nasimi, “Air strike on Afghanistan -- an eyewitness account.”

their mistakes.”<sup>125</sup> In mid-June, a month after the airstrike, the *Sunday Times* reported that the airstrike remained a significant political issue.

### **Farah Province Security Analysis**

Just as the political backlash to the Granai airstrike played out as expected, Farah seems to have shown the typical spike in violence that previous research would have predicted. From the evidence below, it seems that insurgents may have gained extra capability in the two months after the airstrike. The month of June saw three or four more attacks than usual, two of which were large-scale attacks. During the spike in June, the locations of the attacks were diverse, as were the targets. Additionally, a high-level assassination of a district mayor took place just two weeks after the airstrike. However, the change in the security landscape was short-lived. By the time July came around, the number and type of attacks looked just as they did in the period before the airstrike. All in all, given the scale of the Granai airstrike and the strong political backlash throughout Afghanistan, the changes in the security landscape seemed relatively subtle and short-lived.

#### **Number of Attacks**

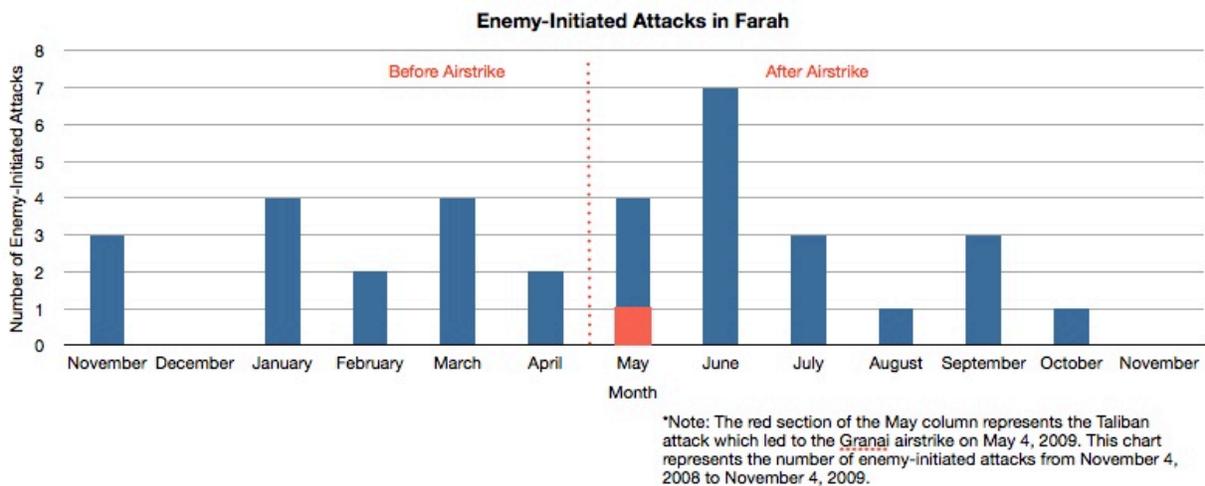
The total number of enemy-initiated attacks reported in the six months before the airstrike was 15, while the total number reported in the six months after the airstrike was 18, indicating only a minor change in the overall level of violence over time. It is important to keep in mind

---

<sup>125</sup> Jon Swain and Jerome Starkey, “Villagers slain as they took cover; Afghanistan Grieving civilians contradict American claims that the scores of victims of a devastating airstrike were insurgents,” *The Sunday Times* (London), 14 June 2009, News, p. 22, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

that the second period also includes the summer months when fighting usually peaks in Afghanistan, which could have influenced the increase in violence. However, aside from the spike in June, patterns of violence in Farah did not seem to follow the usual seasonal trends. Instead, the number of attacks seemed to stay relatively consistent throughout the year.

The most noticeable spike in enemy-initiated attacks was in June, one month after the airstrike. While in most months, the number of attacks tended to hover around two to four, June saw seven attacks. This looks very much like the increase in the number of insurgent-initiated attacks following an airstrike that previous research would predict. Perhaps the spike in violence was delayed until June because of time spent recruiting and planning in May. However, the magnitude of the increase was not exceedingly large and, as we shall see, spread out across districts that were already quite volatile.



### Geographical Location of Attacks

It is difficult to evaluate any changes in the geographical location of the attacks, because almost half the news reports of violent incidents that took place after the airstrike do not specify where they took place. However, from what little data I have, it does not seem like the violence

spread to new districts. Both before and after the airstrike, most violence was concentrated in the districts surrounding the notorious Ring Road (i.e. Pusht Rod, Bakwa, Delaram, Gulistan, and Bala Boluk). In Bala Boluk, where the airstrike took place, the total number of incidents reported in the six months after the airstrike (5) is just slightly higher than the number of incidents reported before the airstrike (3).

The spike in violence in June did not seem to be concentrated any more than usual in Bala Boluk. The increase in violence occurred in a number of districts in the center of the province, including Pusht Rod, Delaram, Gulistan, and Bala Boluk. Then again, journalists were advised not to visit the site of the bombing on their own in the immediate aftermath of the strike because of the high presence of Taliban in the area.<sup>126</sup> This could indicate that security had worsened in the area where the strike took place.

### **Scale and Complexity of Attacks**

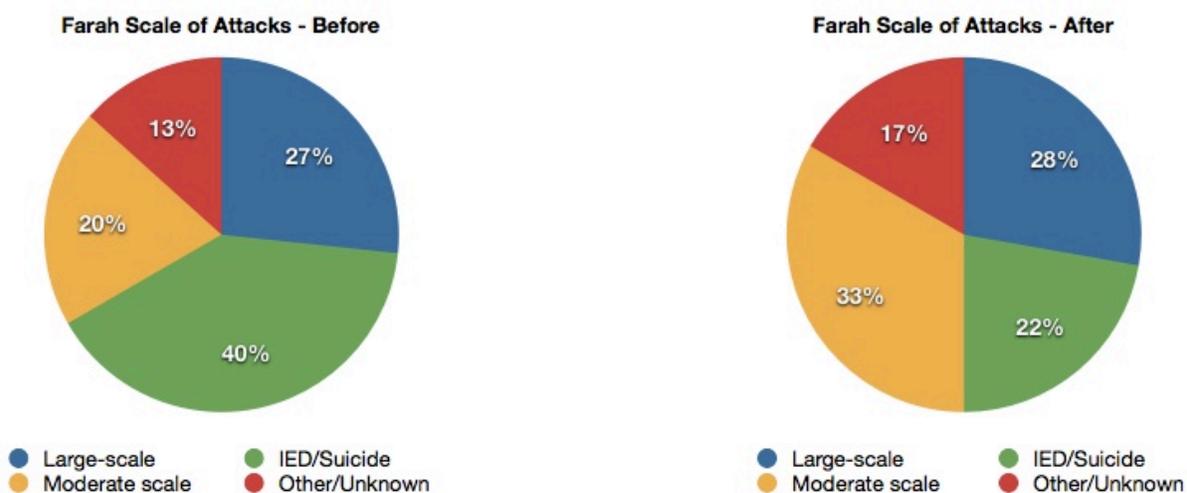
There was no dramatic change in the scale of the attacks before and after the strike. That being said, there was a slight shift from the use of IEDs and suicide bombings to more moderate-scale ambushes after the airstrike. This is particularly evident in the two months after the airstrike, during which the Taliban seem to have abandoned their use of IEDs and suicide bombings in favor of moderate- to large-scale attacks. Furthermore, the spike in violence in June culminated in two large-scale attacks near the end of the month. One of those attacks was located in Bala Boluk and was highly orchestrated. The Taliban forced residents in the area to evacuate

---

<sup>126</sup> Carlotta Gall and Taimoor Shah, “Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds,” *The International Herald Tribune*, 15 May 2009, News, p. 1.

their homes, after which they took up positions in the abandoned compounds. From there, they launched an attack at dawn on several government posts. The battle went on for several hours.

This could indicate that the Taliban had a slightly larger force than before. Then again, no IEDs or suicide attacks were used in the month leading up to the airstrike either, and by that point, the Taliban had clearly built up a force large enough to launch the large scale attack in May which led to the Granai airstrike. So, it is unclear whether this change in tactics is attributable to the airstrike or was already in the works before the airstrike took place.



	Total attacks	Large-scale	IED/Suicide	Moderate scale	Other/Unknown
<b>Before</b>	15	4	6	3	2
<b>After</b>	18	5	4	6	3

### Targets of Attacks

There was little change in who insurgents targeted before and after the strike. Most enemy-initiated attacks targeted foreign forces. The Afghan army and police were also frequently

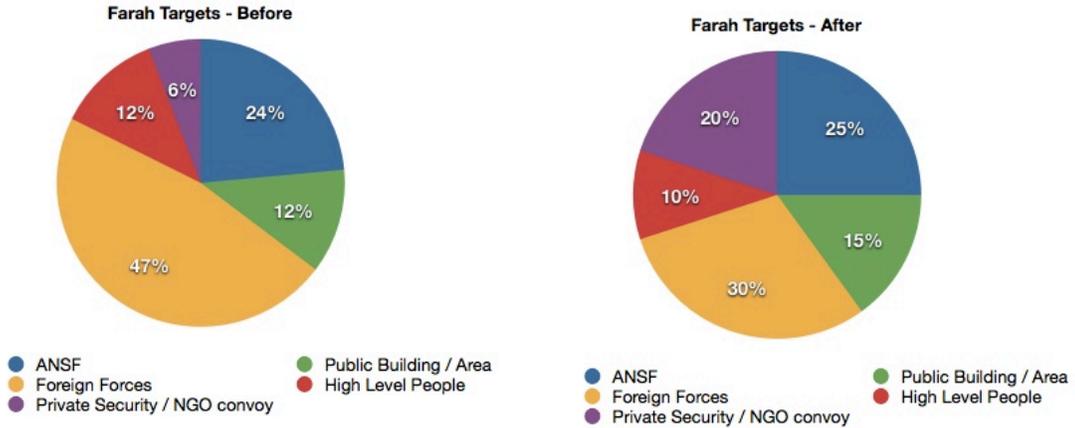
targeted. This did not change considerably over time. However, there was a slight diversification of targets in the second period as insurgents decreased the number of attacks targeting foreign forces and increased attacks on private security and NGO convoys.

During the spike in violence in June, the targets were also varied, including Afghan police officers, ANA soldiers, American soldiers, Italian soldiers, a U.S. Protection and Investigations convoy of and a private security checkpoint. The only indication of a possible attack in retaliation for the airstrike was the assassination of the mayor of Delaram district in an ambush by the side of the highway, which occurred within two weeks after the airstrike. This was the highest level governing official killed by the Taliban during this yearlong timespan, the other two being the security commanders of Delaram.

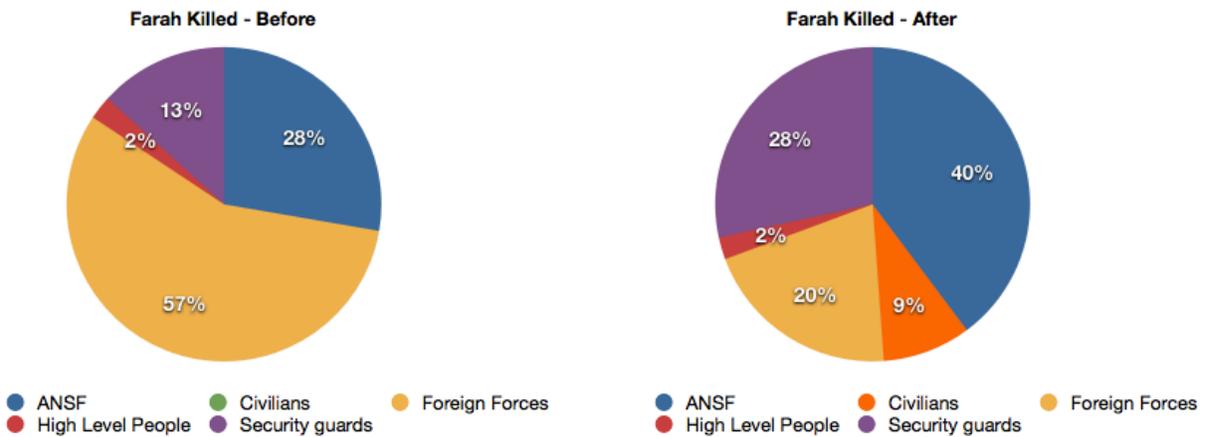
Overall, there was little change in who was being targeted by insurgents, aside from a slight shift away from foreign troops. The more dramatic changes were in who was being killed in enemy-initiated attacks. In the first period, foreign forces made up the majority of fatalities reported in the media. In the second period, it was Afghan forces, followed by private security guards. However, this may have been because in the first period there were more reports originating from Taliban websites which were being republished by the BBC. Taliban sites may have been more likely to exaggerate the number of foreign forces killed.

Overall, the fact that foreign troops were both less likely to be targeted and perhaps less likely to be killed in the second period may suggest that insurgents were simply searching for the easiest targets in the period after the airstrike. This may suggest that the violence was not driven primarily by revenge attitudes. Given that such a large portion of the blame for the airstrike was

placed on NATO in the media, we would expect revenge-driven violence to target foreign troops. This was not the case.



Targets	ANSF	Public Building / Area	Foreign Forces	High Level People	Private Security / NGO convoy
<b>Before</b>	4	2	8	2	1
<b>After</b>	5	3	6	2	4



	<b>ANSF</b>	<b>Civilians</b>	<b>Foreign Forces</b>	<b>High Level People</b>	<b>Security guards</b>
<b>Killed Before</b>	23	0	47	2	11
<b>Killed After</b>	35	8	18	2	25

### **Farah Conclusions**

In summary, the spike in violence in June suggests that the Taliban had gained capability in the immediate aftermath of the airstrike in Granai. The fact that the location and targets of the attacks in June were varied and that the month ended in two large-scale attacks supports this conclusion. There was no shift toward targeting foreign forces, which could suggest that revenge attitudes were not the main driver of violence. After June, the security landscape returned to normal, meaning that in the long run, there was no fundamental change in the security landscape.

Both in terms of the political reaction to the airstrike and the changes in insurgent violence after the airstrike, Farah was quite typical. It was so typical, in fact, that the changes in its security landscape did not seem to live up to the expectation that mass-casualty airstrikes would lead to drastic security changes. The biggest takeaway from the Farah case is that the outcomes of even mass-casualty airstrikes are more subtle than we might expect.

Now that we have taken an in-depth look at Farah, we will turn to Kunduz—a case which, in every way, runs contrary to previous academic research and common perceptions of the effects of a mass-casualty airstrike.

## CHAPTER III: KUNDUZ PROVINCE

### Provincial Background

Kunduz Province is located in Northern Afghanistan, far-flung from the Afghan capital and largely agricultural. The province is bordered by Takhar, Baghlan, Samangan, Balkh and Tajikistan. It is much smaller than Farah geographically, with a smaller population and a larger portion of urban-dwellers.<sup>127</sup> As of 2011, Kunduz had a population of 773,387, about three-quarters of which resided in rural areas.<sup>128</sup> According to the 2009 Naval Postgraduate School's provincial overviews, Kunduz also had a higher literacy rate, greater access to electricity and more health clinics than Farah.<sup>129</sup> Still, Kunduz was rural and its communities isolated. Germany was leading the mission in Kunduz, although a small number of American and Belgian troops were also stationed there. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz was run by the Germans.

There was significant inter-ethnic tension in Kunduz, mainly among ethnic Pashtuns, Tajiks and Hazaras. The conflict dated back to ancient land disputes and manifested itself in the form of massacres during Taliban rule in the 1990s. The three largest ethnic groups in 2009 were Pashtun (33%), Uzbek (27%), and Tajik (22%), with a relatively even proportion of each residing in Kunduz. The vast majority were Sunni Muslim (94%) with a small Shi'a minority (6%). The

---

<sup>127</sup> "Province: Kunduz," *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS*. The Naval Postgraduate School, 15 September 2009. Web. 10 April 2015.

<sup>128</sup> "Province: Kunduz," *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS*. The Naval Postgraduate School, 15 November 2011. Web. 10 April 2015.

<sup>129</sup> "Province: Kunduz," 2009.

Pashtun communities proved more susceptible to infiltration by insurgent forces. As a result, many Tajiks and Uzbeks blamed the Taliban's burning of schools on Pashtun Taliban sympathizers. The Gilzhai Pastun in Kunduz are the largest single tribe in the Pashtun ethnicity and made up the backbone of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. In September 2009, after the Chahar Dara airstrike, the *Washington Post* reported that many Kunduz residents had long been worried that if the Pashtun Taliban were able to gain control of the region, it could trigger a return to past ethnic strife.

The Northern provinces, home to the Northern Alliance, were the site of the strongest Taliban resistance after 2001, and the region was generally considered peaceful after the overthrow of the Taliban.<sup>130</sup> According to Former Governor of Kunduz General Muhammad Daoud, who spoke to the *International Herald Tribune*, the Taliban were scattered and defeated after the 2001 invasion, but they never left the North. Instead, they chose to lay low.<sup>131</sup> Between 2003 and 2005, Afghan refugees, some of whom were sympathetic toward the Taliban, began reentering the country from Pakistan. As a result, Taliban " sleeper cells " began to slowly infiltrate Kunduz. However, in 2004, it was still Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami (HIG) faction—not the Taliban—that remained the most capable insurgent group in the region.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Ben Arnoldy, "NATO airstrike in Afghanistan overshadows drop in casualties," *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>131</sup> Carlotta Gall, "Taliban revival highlights hard choices in war; In Afghanistan, security has unraveled even in peaceful northern region," *The International Herald Tribune*, 27 November 2009 Friday: 1097 words, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>132</sup> Matthew C. DuPée, "Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province," Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS - Online Journal, The Naval Postgraduate School, 1 November 2009. Web. 10 April 2015, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

The Taliban began to make its comeback in Kunduz in 2007 when a new strategic logistics route for NATO supplies traveling from Russia to Central Asia was opened.<sup>133</sup> Kunduz was in a key strategic location, containing a NATO supply route known as the Northern Distribution Network, which made it an attractive place for a Taliban resurgence.<sup>134</sup> As they reasserted their influence, the Taliban began a disturbing campaign of burning down schools. In 2007 alone, they destroyed 187 schools.<sup>135</sup> By the spring of 2008, militants along with some foreign fighters began appearing in groups of as many as 100. They assassinated local leaders, took control of several Pashtun areas, and forced ethnic Uzbeks from their homes in certain districts. In the beginning, they engaged in more subtle attempts to bring law and order to some areas and woo prominent Pashtun families. Later, they became more coercive, collecting taxes, demanding to be fed and threatening those who do not support them.<sup>136</sup>

From 2007 to 2009, Taliban presence increased, aided by the low levels of pro-government forces defending the area. Because Kunduz was considered largely peaceful, coalition forces reduced the presence of soldiers and police in the area in order to increase their presence in more unstable regions. In 2008, the Karzai administration reduced the number of police officers in Kunduz from 1,500 to 1,000. In 2009, the Interior Ministry ordered 200 police officers from every northern province to help secure the capital, Kabul, which was being threatened by a rise in insurgents attacks. The district of Chahar Dara, where the provincial

---

<sup>133</sup> Gall, "Taliban revival highlights hard choices in war; In Afghanistan, security has unraveled even in peaceful northern region."

<sup>134</sup> DuPée, "Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province."

<sup>135</sup> "Province: Kunduz," 2009, p.9

<sup>136</sup> Gall, ""Taliban revival highlights hard choices in war; In Afghanistan, security has unraveled even in peaceful northern region."

governor said hundreds of insurgents were at large, had only 56 police officers, enough only to guard the district center and the main road.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, the German troops who were responsible for the area were severely limited in their ability to pursue insurgents. By July 2009, the Taliban had set up their own administration in Chahar Dara, complete with a tax collection and court system.

It was around this time that international observers began to pay more attention to the growing insurgency in the North. That same year, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace released a study warning of the dangers of ignoring the northern provinces. Abdul Latif Sahak, of The Institute for War & Peace Reporting, wrote that the lack of good governance in the north made the region ripe for a Taliban resurgence: “Promised assistance has been slow to materialize; unemployment is high and the central government is weak and cannot rein in commanders or warlords who terrorize the populations under their control.”<sup>138</sup> In 2009, Kunduz was still largely controlled by warlords, who were involved in a number of illegal activities.<sup>139</sup> By then, an estimated 600 to 800 full-time Taliban fighters were engaged in Kunduz along with an additional 60 Chechen, Uzbek and Arab foreign fighters. According to the Naval Postgraduate School, the Taliban would “brazenly” operate in “broad daylight,” traveling in large packs and protected by their commanders.<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> Gall, “Taliban revival highlights hard choices in war; In Afghanistan, security has unraveled even in peaceful northern region.”

<sup>138</sup> Abdul Latif Sahak, “Taliban posting gains in northern Afghanistan,” *The Monitor*, McAllen, Texas, 15 July 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>139</sup> “Province: Kunduz,” 2009, p.9

<sup>140</sup> DuPée, “Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province.”

In 2009, there was a spike in insurgent violence in Kunduz that caught the attention of the media. Two key factors influenced the spike in violence. First, the Taliban had planned for a large-scale intimidation campaign throughout the country in order to discourage people from voting in the national elections in August. In Kunduz, they successfully forced 22 out of the 80 polling station in Chahar Dara, Aqtash and Khanabad to remain closed. They also destroyed several ballot boxes by burning them or throwing them into the river.<sup>141</sup> During the elections, the Taliban had returned with such a force that they were threatening to overrun the city.<sup>142</sup>

Second, the surge of troops in the south led to an increase in Taliban activity up north. In early July, the United States led a major ground assault in Helmand province. The reaction among insurgents was not to increase their resistance in Helmand but to limit their activities in the South for the duration of the assault. Meanwhile, they stepped up their tactics in other provinces, most notably in the North where NATO presence was limited. One American military policeman who was deployed to Kunduz to help train elements of the ANP said that while Taliban activity increased during this time, the Taliban had always exercised a certain level of control over the province.

What everybody fails to realize is that Kunduz is the only area that the Northern Alliance never really got control of. It always stayed under insurgent control.

During the time that I was there with our infantry brigade, with my team, that was also the time of the surge down south when they flooded Patikta province with

---

<sup>141</sup> DuPée, "Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province."

<sup>142</sup> Gall, "Taliban revival highlights hard choices in war; In Afghanistan, security has unraveled even in peaceful northern region."

marines... Well, to get away from that, where did they think the insurgents came?

They came up North.<sup>143</sup>

The violence that spiked before the election was contained, but the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) still concluded that the province remained “at risk.”<sup>144</sup> Overall, however, the Taliban cells in Kunduz remained less sophisticated than their counterparts in more volatile regions in the south. Taliban attacks were more often spontaneous rather than orchestrated and usually involved about a dozen fighters. One American intelligence sergeant who arrived in November, two months after the airstrike said she “did not feel so much in harm’s way in Kunduz in comparison to other areas that I’ve been to in that country.” According to all three military sources I interviewed, the Kunduz Taliban were also less sophisticated in their use of psychological operation, or psy-ops, a factor which is likely to have influenced the muted reaction to the Kunduz airstrike in September.

### **The Airstrike**

On September 3, 2009, the Taliban hijacked two fuel tankers in the middle of the night on the main road from Afghanistan to Tajikistan. They were driving the trucks to a place where they could unload their contents when the vehicles got stuck in the mud while crossing the Kunduz

---

<sup>143</sup> April 1, 2015, telephone interview.

<sup>144</sup> Gall, "Taliban revival highlights hard choices in war; In Afghanistan, security has unraveled even in peaceful northern region."

river. They were around seven miles from Kunduz city, near a village called Haji Aman.<sup>145</sup>

Meanwhile, German forces had requested help from an American B-1B bomber in locating the trucks.<sup>146</sup> When the Taliban could not move the tankers, they began calling, and by some accounts forcing, local villagers to come and take the fuel. As many as 500 villagers, poor and eager for sources of heat for the upcoming winter, gathered around the tanker to fill their containers from home with as much fuel as possible.<sup>147</sup> "The Taliban called to the villagers, 'Come take free fuel,' " recalled Abdul Moman Omar Khel, a member of the Kunduz provincial council and a native of the village that was hit. "The people are so hungry and poor."<sup>148</sup>

The looting went on for hours, during which the U.S. B-1B bomber spotted the tankers on the ground. The crew reported seeing rocket-propelled grenades and small arms among the crowd. After 10 minutes over the site, bomber went to refuel. Because fuel tankers had been used in the past to launch suicide attacks and because insurgent violence had increased so much in recent months, German troops feared that the Taliban were planning to use the tankers to launch a large-scale suicide attack against their base in Kunduz. German Colonel Georg Klein later told the *Washington Post*: "My feeling was that if we let them get away with these tankers, they will

---

<sup>145</sup> Kim Sengupta and David Usborne, "Rift with Karzai worsens as 95 perish in Nato air strike; Deadly attack undermines politicians' attempts to convince public that Afghan war is worth fighting," *The Independent*, London, News, p. 4, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>146</sup> DuPée, "Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province."

<sup>147</sup> "Village burying its dead after air strike; NATO jet sets off fireball which kills up to 90 Taliban and civilians," *Morning Star*, Foreign Desk, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>148</sup> Bill Hutchinson, "Afghan Officials Say NATO Bombs Killed Civilians," *Daily News*, New York, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

prepare them to attack police stations or even the PRT.”<sup>149</sup> Klein declared incident an imminent threat and called in two U.S. F-15E fighter jets, which arrived in the area at about 1:20 a.m., according to Amnesty International.

Unlike the B-1B bombers, the fighter jets that Colonel Klein called in did not use strong cameras that can identify details on the ground, but instead used automatic infrared cameras that showed people on the ground as black spots, making it even more difficult than usual to differentiate civilians from insurgents based on the images alone. The Germans were relying on a sole Afghan informant, who was insisting that everyone gathered around the fuel tankers was an insurgent.<sup>150</sup> Later investigations found that the source was not present at the strike, but was receiving information over the phone. Believing that the people on the ground were mainly Taliban, Klein gave the order to bomb the area at 2:30 a.m.<sup>151</sup> The fighter jet dropped two 500-pound guided munitions, one on each truck. The destruction would have been worse had the airstrike coordinator not rejected the F-15 pilot’s recommendation to use 2,000-pound bombs.<sup>152</sup>

Al Jazeera correspondent James Bays described what he saw in the village nearest the bombing site: “A very sad scene there. Watching the bodies being brought outside the mosque in the village, people praying.”

One particularly graphic article in the *Guardian* described villagers picking through the wreckage, searching for their family members, trying to recognize them by their shoes or any

---

<sup>149</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike,” *The Washington Post*, 6 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>150</sup> Chandrasekaran, “Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike.”

<sup>151</sup> *German Air Strike Near Kunduz – A Year After: Evaluation of Judicial Reactions and Further Information*. Rep. Berlin: European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, 2010. p.3

<sup>152</sup> *German Air Strike Near Kunduz – A Year After: Evaluation of Judicial Reactions and Further Information*, p.3

other details that weren't charred in the bombing. Omar Khan, the village chief of Eissa Khail, said the bodies looked like burnt tree logs. When villagers began fighting over the corpses, village elders intervened, asking everyone to line up and report how many of their family members were missing. The elders then began handing out bodies or pieces of bodies at random so that every family who lost someone could have a burial. Only five families walked away without any remains. The authors of the report interviewed family members of the victims in the basement of a hotel in the city:

Jan Mohammad, an old man with a white beard and green eyes, said angrily: "I ran, I ran to find my son because nobody would give me a lift. I couldn't find him."

He dropped his head on his palm that was resting on the table, and started banging his head against his white mottled hand. When he raised his head his eyes were red and tears were rolling down his cheek: "I couldn't find my son, so I took a piece of flesh with me home and I called it my son. I told my wife we had him, but I didn't let his children or anyone see. We buried the flesh as if it was my son."

He broke off, then shouted at the young Assadullah, who had knocked at the old man's house and told his son to come with them there was free fuel for everyone, "You destroyed my home," Assadu-llah turned his head and looked at the wall. "You destroyed my home," he shouted again. Jan Mohammad dropped his head again on his palm and rolled it left and right, his big gray turban moving

like a huge pendulum, “Taouba (forgiveness),” he hissed. “People lost their fathers and sons for a little bit of fuel. Forgiveness.”

The first stages of the investigation of the incident began the next day, as villagers were already burying the remains. Former Commander of ISAF David McKiernan’s 2008 Tactical Directive requires ISAF to immediately investigate an incident in which it may have caused civilian casualties or civilian property damage.<sup>153</sup> Instead, the Germans waited until morning and sent an unmanned aircraft to take photographs of the site of the bombing. By the time the first troops arrived on Friday afternoon, all the bodies had been removed.<sup>154</sup>

In the end, both the Afghan government investigation<sup>155</sup> and the NATO investigation<sup>156</sup> put the number of civilian deaths at 30, though the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan estimated the civilian deaths at around 74. Al Jazeera correspondent James Bays reported that it was impossible to count the dead. Some bodies were completely incinerated by the fireball while others were burnt beyond recognition.<sup>157</sup>

The casualties were made all the more deplorable—at least on the international stage—because just two months earlier on July 2, McChrystal had released a revised Tactical Directive

---

<sup>153</sup> International Security Assistance Force Headquarters, "Tactical Directive," 30 December 2009, Kabul, Afghanistan.

<sup>154</sup> Chandrasekaran, “Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike.”

<sup>155</sup> “Kunduz raid 'killed 30 civilians,’” Aljazeera.net, 13 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>156</sup> Yochi Dreazen, “NATO Says Strike Hit 30 Civilians,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>157</sup> “Nato begins Afghan bombing inquiry,” Aljazeera.net, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

which required leaders at all levels to “scrutinize and limit the use of force like close air support (CAS) against residential compounds and other locations likely to produce civilian casualties in accordance with this guidance.” Issued in response to the May 4 Granai airstrike, the directive focused particularly heavily on bombings and raids on residential compounds. However, the spirit of the directive is embodied in the following statement: “We must avoid the trap of winning tactical victories—but suffering strategic defeats—by causing civilian casualties or excessive damage and thus alienating the people.”<sup>158</sup>

During a video conference in June, three months before the Kunduz bombing, Stanley McChrystal had said to a group of his senior officers: “Air power contains the seeds of our own destruction if we do not use it responsibly. We can lose this fight.”<sup>159</sup>

McChrystal and other members of ISAF braced for an angry reaction to this most recent bombing.

### **The Reaction**

Below, I have again detailed the responses of different actors to the Kunduz strike. Most notable was the muted, and often supportive, reaction of local civilians and government officials. The local Taliban also did not seem to take advantage of the airstrike to stoke resentment against foreign troops. If they did, their efforts were not effective. Sources on the ground say the national and international reactions of ISAF, Germany, and Taliban leadership went largely unnoticed by

---

<sup>158</sup> International Security Assistance Force Headquarters, "Tactical Directive," 6 July 2009, Kabul, Afghanistan.

<sup>159</sup> Richard A Ooppel. and Abdul Waheed Wafa, “80 Afghans killed in NATO airstrike; Taliban-hijacked trucks were target, but civilians reportedly among dead,” *The International Herald Tribune*, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

most of the population in Kunduz. After I outline the immediate reactions of key actors, I will provide a security analysis of Taliban-initiated violence in Kunduz.

## **U.S. and NATO**

The United States and the NATO fact-finding team responded quickly and deftly to the situation in Kunduz. Reporter Pamela Constable of the *Washington Post* even suggested that the U.S. reaction may have helped diffuse tensions among locals in Kunduz.<sup>160</sup> Constable quoted one senior U.N. official as saying, “There has been a marked difference in the way the U.S. military dealt with this incident. Instead of arguing about the number of casualties, as has happened often in the past, they recognized the Afghan perception and addressed it.”

In the wake of the strike Thursday night, NATO immediately ordered an investigation into the incident.<sup>161</sup> A team of seven fact-finders arrived in Kunduz on Friday September 4, in the afternoon, planning to visit the bombing site that day.<sup>162</sup> In a nod to the spirit of transparency, the investigative team allowed journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran of the *Washington Post* to document their mission, a decision which reportedly enraged senior German commanders when they found out.<sup>163</sup> However, Colonel Klein urged the fact-finding team to postpone the trip to the bombing

---

<sup>160</sup> Pamela Constable, “Afghan Reaction To Strike Muted; Anger at Taliban, Apology by U.S. Deflect The Usual Outrage Over Civilian Deaths,” *The Washington Post*, September 8, 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>161</sup> Farrell, Stephen and Richard A. Oppel Jr., “NATO Strike Magnifies Divide on Afghan War,” *The New York Times*, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>162</sup> Chandrasekaran, “Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike.”

<sup>163</sup> “German daily says country pledges full probe into Afghan raid,” *BBC Monitoring Europe - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 7 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

site for their safety, saying that it was too dangerous in the area where the strike occurred. Local residents were angry, he said, and German troops had just been attacked only hours before.

“There’s a likelihood we’ll be shot at,” he said. According to Chandrasekaran’s report, until they had a chance to examine the site, NATO had to keep issuing vague statements while Afghan civilians took to the airwaves to report what they had seen.

One such statement came from press officer for the US and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Lieutenant Commander Christine Sidenstricker and was reported in the *Daily Star* on September 5: “After observing that only insurgents were in the area, the local ISAF commander ordered airstrikes which destroyed the fuel trucks and killed a large number of insurgents," she said. "The strike was against insurgents. That's who we believe were killed. But we are absolutely investigating reports of civilian deaths.” ISAF spokesman Brigadier General Eric Tremblay was more upfront in acknowledging specific reports of civilian casualties coming out of local hospitals: “Based on the information we are receiving from Kunduz, it would appear that many civilian casualties are being evacuated and treated in the local hospitals. There is perhaps a direct link with the incident that has occurred around the two fuel trucks.”

By September 5, only one day after the NATO team arrived in Kunduz, Chandrasekaran’s article in the *Washington Post* reported that the fact-finders so far estimated that about 125 people had been killed in the airstrike, at least 24 of whom were civilians. The same day, the *Qatar Tribune* reported that the White House had expressed ‘great concern’ over the loss of civilian lives.

McChrystal showed a particular commitment to investigating the incident and making peace with the local population, even when local Kunduz officials downplayed the incident. In

the aftermath of the strike, he phoned up Karzai to apologize personally and assure the Afghan president that he had not called in the strike. McChrystal also recorded a video message, translated into Pashto and Dari and released to Afghan news outlets. Addressing the Afghan people, he said, “As commander of the International Security Assistance Force, nothing is more important than the safety and protection of the Afghan people. I take this possible loss of life or injury to innocent Afghans very seriously.” McChrystal also promised to share the results of the investigation into the incident with the Afghan people.<sup>164</sup> The General also drove to the bombing site despite German insistence that the area was too dangerous:

After fording the muddy river to see the bombing site—getting his pants wet up to his knees—he addressed a small group of journalists at the reconstruction team headquarters and said it was “clear there were some civilians harmed at that site.” He said NATO would fully investigate the incident. “It’s a serious event that’s going to be a test of whether we are willing to be transparent and whether we are willing to show that we are going to protect the Afghan people,” he said.<sup>165</sup>

Chandrasekaran wrote: “McChrystal still had a message to deliver. Even if the Afghan officials were not angry, he certainly did not seem pleased.” A little less than two weeks after the strike, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the NATO team had found that the strike hit 30 civilians, the same number reported by Karzai’s investigative team.

---

<sup>164</sup> “McChrystal makes Afghan TV address,” Aljazeera.net, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>165</sup> Chandrasekaran, “Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike.”

Though ISAF's handling of the incident was much improved and may have helped ease tensions, one sergeant who patrolled Chahar Dara district in the aftermath of the airstrike said locals paid little attention to the official attempts to mitigate the crisis. "You have to understand, in Afghanistan, it isn't like there's a television in every mud hut there," he said.<sup>166</sup>

## Germany

While NATO allowed for the possibility of civilian casualties from the beginning, the German military at first denied that any civilians had been killed. This later led to a major shake-up within Germany, ending with the resignation of two high-level officials.

German officials originally said on September 5 that at least 50 Taliban had been killed in the airstrike and that no civilians had been killed.<sup>167</sup> This was the same day that the *Washington Post* reported that the NATO fact-finding team was estimating civilian casualties at around 24. The official German army statement read, "There were no civilian casualties; there were no German casualties."<sup>168</sup> A Defense Ministry spokesman said he could give no details about civilian casualties.<sup>169</sup>

By September 7, two days after the *Washington Post* reported on the NATO investigation, German Chancellor Angela Merkel had ordered a full probe into the incident. Around this time, most within the German government were backing away from their earlier insistence that only Taliban had been killed and admitting some civilians may have lost their lives. However, they

---

<sup>166</sup> April 1, 2015, telephone interview.

<sup>167</sup> Farrell and Opiel, "NATO Strike Magnifies Divide on Afghan War."

<sup>168</sup> Salarzai, Ameen, "Attack by NATO kills at least 90 Afghans," *Sydney Morning Herald*, Australia, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>169</sup> Farrell and Opiel, "NATO Strike Magnifies Divide on Afghan War."

still defended Klein's decision to call in the airstrike.<sup>170</sup> The same day that Merkel called for an investigation, the BBC reported that Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung upheld the decision to call in the airstrike, telling the *Bild am Sonntag* newspaper: "The air raid was absolutely necessary. I can't comprehend how some people can so quickly criticize the military action without knowing what the situation was or the background information.... [I]n my view, the commander made the right decision. Based on the information I got, only Taliban terrorists were killed in the strike." Merkel said that if any civilians had been killed in the airstrike, she would "naturally deeply regret that."<sup>171</sup>

The next day, on September 8, Jung told the German television network ZDF that he could no longer rule out the possibility that there were civilian deaths, though he still insisted that "the predominant share were Taliban."<sup>172</sup> Amidst mounting criticism of the German government, Jung continued to reject calls for his resignation.<sup>173</sup>

On September 12, Germany's *Der Spiegel* reported that Bundeswehr Chief of Staff Wolfgang Schneiderhahn had for the first time issued a statement on the Kunduz bombing, defending Colonel Klein. The decision, Schneiderhahn said, "was taken only after careful

---

<sup>170</sup> "Germany urges outsiders to hold criticism of Afghan airstrike pending investigation," *Guelph Mercury*, Ontario, Canada, 7 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>171</sup> "German daily says country pledges full probe into Afghan raid," *BBC Monitoring Europe - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 7 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>172</sup> Judy Dempsey and Nicholas Kulish, "As Criticism Mounts, Germany Defends Decision on Afghan Airstrike," *The New York Times*, 8 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>173</sup> "Germany faces heat over deadly air strike; Troops feared attack by Taliban fighters," *Ottawa Citizen*, 8 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

assessment of the overall situation and with the intention of preventing considerable anticipated dangers for our own and allied as well as Afghan security forces.”<sup>174</sup>

In late November 2009, Inspector-General of the German Army Wolfgang Schneiderhan along with a junior officer Peter Wichert resigned<sup>175</sup> followed by Former German Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung.<sup>176</sup> Overall consensus within Germany and in the international community was that the German response to the strike was bungled and lacked transparency. However, if few locals were paying attention to the ISAF response, few were paying attention to the German response.

### **Karzai Administration**

Overall, Karzai’s reaction was more muted than his reaction to the Granai airstrike. Two days later, on September 5, Karzai said he was "deeply saddened" at the loss of civilian lives.<sup>177</sup> “No civilians must be harmed during military operations,” he said. “Targeting civilians under no circumstances is acceptable.”<sup>178</sup> He also put together a panel to investigate the strike.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup> “Germany’s Bundeswehr chief of staff defends Kunduz air strike,” *BBC Monitoring Europe - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 13 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>175</sup> Roger Boyes, “General has to quit after video reveals airstrike blunder that killed civilians,” *The Times*, London, News, p. 47, 27 November, 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>176</sup> “Merkel ally resigns over Afghan deaths,” *The Gazette*, Montreal, 28 November, 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>177</sup> Hutchinson, “Afghan Officials Say NATO Bombs Killed Civilians.”

<sup>178</sup> “Village burying its dead after air strike; NATO jet sets off fireball which kills up to 90 Taliban and civilians.”

<sup>179</sup> “NATO airstrike on Afghan fuel tankers kills 9,” *Irish Examiner*, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20; “Village burying its dead after air strike; NATO jet sets off fireball which kills up to 90 Taliban and civilians.”

Three days later, in an interview with *Le Figaro* magazine, he called the decision to call in the airstrike a “major error of judgement.” He asked why other options like sending in ground troops had not been explored before Klein resorted to the bombing of the tankers: “Why didn’t they send in ground troops to recover the fuel tanks?” In the same interview, Karzai was careful to specify that McChrystal had called him personally to apologize and to tell the Afghan president that he had not called in the strike.<sup>180</sup>

However, Karzai’s statements, though critical of the airstrike, were not as critical of the NATO operation in Afghanistan as a whole as they were in the wake of the Farah airstrike. Pamela Constable of the *Washington Post* noted that President Karzai issued “no blistering condemnation” of the strike.<sup>181</sup> Unlike in the case of the Granai airstrike, Karzai did not call on international forces to halt their use of airstrikes.

## **The Taliban**

Though on a national level, the Taliban leadership acted to exploit the airstrike on their website and in the media, local Taliban cells in Kunduz did not seem to do anything to capitalize on the strike. On September 4, the day after the strike, the Taliban released a statement on their website condemning the bombing and alleging that the fuel tankers had been “left by the enemy.” The statement said that the Taliban, who refer to themselves as the Mujahadeen, allowed locals to siphon off fuel at the villagers’ request but attempted to disperse the crowd when they saw

---

<sup>180</sup> “Merkel to face Parliament over deadly Afghan air strike that killed 70 civilians,” *The Daily Star*, Lebanon, 8 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>181</sup> Constable, “Afghan Reaction To Strike Muted; Anger at Taliban, Apology by U.S. Deflect The Usual Outrage Over Civilian Deaths.”

enemy reconnaissance planes above. The statement also declared that all the victims were civilians, many of whom were “miserable youths and students.” According to the statement, foreign forces also used white phosphorus in the attack. Along with the statement, they published a list of names of the people who were missing, presumed killed in the airstrike.<sup>182</sup>

The day the statement was released, Aljazeera quoted a Taliban spokesman named Zabihullah Mujahid saying that as many as 90 civilians had been killed.<sup>183</sup> The Taliban also made an unusual plea to the United Nations for an investigation. *The National Post* reported: “The incident may also mark a troubling evolution in the Taliban's propaganda war. Until now, Afghanistan's former ruthless, fundamentalist rulers have eschewed all Westerners as infidel invaders.”<sup>184</sup>

However, according to three members of the U.S. army who were stationed in Kunduz at the time, the local Taliban made no noticeable attempt to exploit the airstrike. None were aware of any attempts to spread news of the incident by word of mouth. “The Taliban up there, the cells up North, weren’t as advanced in psy-ops as the cells that operated down South,” said one source. This is significant considering that internet access was limited in Kunduz, with only 18% having access to electricity (5% in rural areas). Most information traveled by word-of-mouth or cell phone. That meant that the number of people in Kunduz who saw what the Taliban were posting on their website was probably limited.

---

<sup>182</sup> DuPée, “Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province.”

<sup>183</sup> “Scores dead in Nato raid on Kunduz,” *Times of Oman*, Published on Aljazeera.net, 4 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>184</sup> “Sowing moral confusion about Afghanistan,” *The National Post*, Canada, Editorial, pg. A12, 8 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

## Local Kunduz Officials

Though statements from local officials in Kunduz varied, most were in fact supportive of the airstrike. On September 5, the day that the NATO investigation began, the *Independent* quoted two local Members of Parliament (MPs) who criticized the bombing. One MP Mohammed Amin Qaneh said: "We are very upset; a lot of ordinary people have been killed...Why did they have to bomb the tankers? Does NATO put the price of oil higher than the price of blood? We want justice; we want those responsible punished." His colleague Qaari Niamtullah added: "Everyone is very angry and the Taliban will just exploit this to get support."<sup>185</sup>

On the other hand, provincial council chairman, Ahmadullah Wardak was highly supportive of the airstrike. He told the NATO fact-finding team that NATO needed to act "more strongly" in the area. When McChrystal came to apologize for the civilian casualties, Wardak cut him off and said he wanted to talk about the deteriorating security situation in Kunduz. "If we do three more operations like was done the other night, stability will come to Kunduz," Wardak said to McChrystal. "If people do not want to live in peace and harmony, that's not our fault." He continued, "We've been too nice to the thugs." Rajiv Chandrasekaran of the *Washington Post* quoted one key local official saying: "I don't agree with the rumor that there were a lot of civilian casualties. Who goes out at 2 in the morning for fuel? These were bad people, and this was a

---

<sup>185</sup> Kim Sengupta and David Osborne, "Rift with Karzai worsens as 95 perish in Nato air strike; Deadly attack undermines politicians' attempts to convince public that Afghan war is worth fighting," *The Independent*, London, News, p. 4, 5 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

good operation.”<sup>186</sup> Provincial Governor Mohammed Omar also expressed support for the strike, saying that normally, the Germans are too soft on the Taliban: “They either flee back to the camp or they sit around crying.”<sup>187</sup> Pamela Constable attributed the lack of outrage over the airstrike to elite indifference at a local level: “...[O]fficials in Kunduz, instead of expressing outrage against the foreign forces, blamed the insurgents for provoking the bombing and even suggested that the civilians who died were Taliban sympathizers.” International observers, she said, had been circulating a private report which said that some Kunduz officials said the villagers were all "relatives" of the insurgents and were "equally guilty" because they had been siphoning off fuel from a stolen tanker when the airstrike occurred.<sup>188</sup>

### **Local Kunduz People**

If there was any anger or unrest among the citizens of Kunduz, it was highly concentrated in the area where the strike took place. There is some evidence that the area where the strike took place may have heated up after the strike. Klein thought the area was too volatile in the immediate aftermath of the strike to send the NATO fact-finders there, and his fears seem to have been confirmed by the kidnapping of *New York Times* journalist Stephen Farrell in the same area. Farrell’s interpreter Sultan Munadi had called one of his acquaintances who lived in the village of Haji Alam where the airstrike took place. The acquaintance warned him that people were in an

---

<sup>186</sup> Chandrasekaran, “Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike.”

<sup>187</sup> Ulrike Demmer and Shoib Najafizada, “Reaction to Deadly Airstrike: Afghan Provincial Governor Praises German Army,” *Der Spiegel*, 7 September 2009.

<sup>188</sup> Constable, “Afghan Reaction To Strike Muted; Anger at Taliban, Apology by U.S. Deflect The Usual Outrage Over Civilian Deaths.”

angry mood.<sup>189</sup> James Bays, an Al Jazeera correspondent, reported that in the village nearest to the bombing, there was “real shock and anger at what had happened.”<sup>190</sup> One local villager told a writer from the *Nation* that soon Kunduz would be like Helmand for the foreign forces, meaning resentment would erupt into more attacks on NATO troops.<sup>191</sup> An anchorwoman on Al-Arabiya contended that internally, the strike has “ignited outrage.”<sup>192</sup>

However, even locally, the response did not boil over into public protests. No families lodged any formal complaints in the days after the airstrike.<sup>193</sup> Governor Omar confirmed that civilians were not voicing any concerns about the strike: “The Germans have the support of the population. We didn’t receive any of the complaints one usually gets in cases where civilians are killed.”<sup>194</sup> Tribal elder Mohammad Sarwar was quoted in several newspapers saying, “We blame both the Taliban and the government.”<sup>195</sup>

There was widespread speculation in the aftermath of the airstrike that Kunduz Province would descend into more violence. *The Daily Star* predicted that the incident could “reignite

---

<sup>189</sup> Kim Sengupta, “British hostage is saved - but at cost of Afghan colleague's life; Daring strike by special forces frees journalist from Taliban clutches but deaths lead to angry recriminations in Kabul,” *The Independent*, London, 10 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>190</sup> “Scores dead in Nato raid on Kunduz,” Aljazeera, 5 September 2009.

<sup>191</sup> M. Mohsin, “Afghanistan: foreboding of failure,” *The Nation* (AsiaNet), 23 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>192</sup> “Al-Arabiya interviews UK spokesman, Afghan analyst on situation in Afghanistan” *BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political*, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 8 September 2009, LexisNexis Academic, Web, Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

<sup>193</sup> Constable, “Afghan Reaction To Strike Muted; Anger at Taliban, Apology by U.S. Deflect The Usual Outrage Over Civilian Deaths.”

<sup>194</sup> Demmer and Najafizada, “Reaction to Deadly Airstrike: Afghan Provincial Governor Praises German Army.”

<sup>195</sup> “Village burying its dead after air strike; NATO jet sets off fireball which kills up to 90 Taliban and civilians.”

outrage against foreign troops.”<sup>196</sup> Matthew DuPée of the Naval Postgraduate School wrote two months after the strike, “[T]he German PRT commander George Klein would order an airstrike that will forever change the German mission in Afghanistan and adversely affect the security situation in Kunduz for months, if not years to come.”<sup>197</sup>

However, if deeper resentment existed in the area where the strike took place, it did not spread to other areas in the province. There were no angry protests against NATO forces. The airstrike took place in a hamlet between Chahar Dara and Aliabab districts. Soon after the airstrike, an American military policeman along with his team of Afghan police patrolled an area in Chahar Dara, where he said the atmosphere felt no different than it did before the strike. In fact, one village elder told him that if the foreign forces dropped more bombs, they would kill more thieves.

Our command sent us out the next morning to gather what we call atmospheric where we go out and talk to people. It was a bad scene out there but we weren’t treated any differently than we were any other time going out there...Talking to them, they considered the people who were at the trucks thieves. More of them were actually insurgents according to locals than any of the press reported.

Granted there were civilians that weren’t insurgents there...There really wasn’t any animosity. It was just another day in the war.<sup>198</sup>

---

<sup>196</sup> “Afghan anger after as many as 90 die in NATO air strike,” *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), 5 September, 2009.

<sup>197</sup> DuPée, “Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province.”

<sup>198</sup> April 1, 2015, telephone interview.

An American captain stationed in Kunduz gave a similar account:

[E]ven talking to some of the locals there, they expressed that, you know, it's bombed and you died, that's on you. The people weren't as against it as we initially thought. Because we were preparing to kind of batten down the hatches and all hell's gonna break loose, but that did not happen at all.<sup>199</sup>

An American intelligence sergeant who arrived in Kunduz two months after the airstrike said that by the time she got there, no one was talking about the airstrike anymore.

[I]t just ended up not being a big deal. And that's really a shame to say. From my standpoint, we were onto the next thing really quickly. Whatever the next big thing was—probably an attack in Kandahar or something. It's a shame to say it just wasn't a big deal.<sup>200</sup>

Overall, all indications point to the conclusion that most civilians were either indifferent to or supportive of the strike.

---

<sup>199</sup> April 12, 2015, telephone interview.

<sup>200</sup> April 10, 2015, telephone interview.

## **Kunduz Province Security Analysis**

Just as there was very little political backlash in Kunduz in response to the airstrike, the security situation did not deteriorate as expected. In fact, it improved. There are many factors aside from the airstrike that could have influenced this downward trend in violence. However, by most indicators, the Taliban certainly did not seem to gain extra strength or influence from the airstrike. Looking at the type of attacks, their scale and their targets, there is little evidence to suggest that the airstrike strengthened the Taliban or worsened the security situation.

### **Number of Attacks**

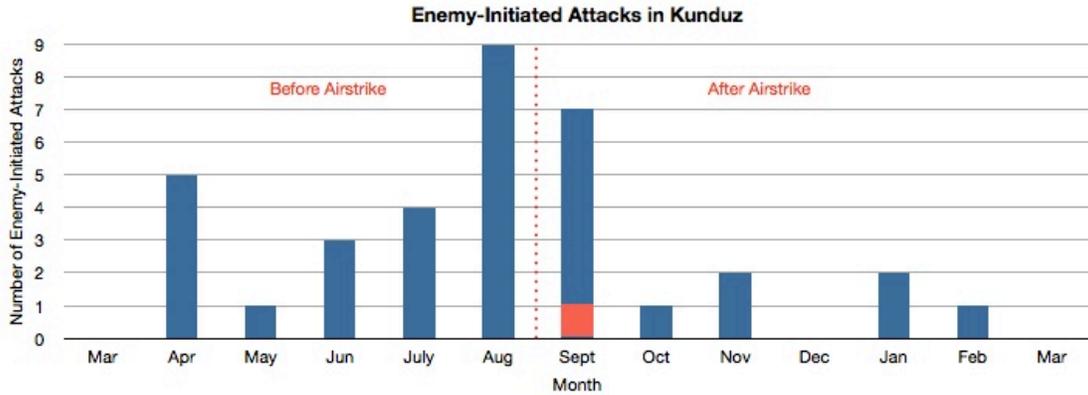
In the six months before the strike, about 23 enemy-initiated attacks were reported in the news. In the six months after the strike, only 12 were reported. It is difficult to rule out the possibility that, had August not been such an unusually volatile month, there might have been a spike in violence in September in the month after the airstrike. However, it is safe to say that the overall security landscape in Kunduz did not get worse as a result of the bombing. Sources on the ground say that the period after the airstrike felt quieter than before.

August saw the highest number of insurgent attacks, with nine reported in the media. These include three lengthy firefights, a complex attack on the ANP which killed the district police chief, the attempted assassination of a former Afghan president, the kidnapping of seven Afghan national police, and finally a massive, coordinated campaign on 57 rocket attacks on the day of the election.

In the months of September, there was a drop in the number of attacks relative to August. The media reported a total of six after the airstrike. However, the number was still very high.

This is rather typical for the month of September given seasonal trends in violence. As mentioned previously, September is one of a cluster of months in which insurgent violence tends to increase. Beginning in July and continuing after the airstrike, Germany began more aggressively going after insurgents in the area, which may have helped control the number of Taliban attacks in the months after the strike.

Many different factors converged at once to precipitate a particularly high level of violence in the months leading up to the airstrike and the subsequent drop in violence after the airstrike. I have already mentioned two: the Taliban intimidation campaign ahead of the August 20 election and the major ground assault in the south. Both the national election and the ground assault in Helmand would have led to a sharp increase in violence before the airstrike. They also coincided with the height of fighting season in Afghanistan. Monthly hostile fatalities data from iCasualties indicate that insurgent violence in Kunduz escalates in the summer, around June, July, August and September. Together, all these factors help account for the spike in insurgent violence in June and July, and the general election was probably the biggest factor in the spike in August. After the airstrike, from November to March, the election violence had subsided, the surge in the south was no longer new, there was a fair bit of snow and the holidays, including Eid, had arrived. Additionally, restrictions on German troops had been loosened, although they still remained highly restricted in their ability to pursue Taliban.



\*Note: The red section of the September column represents the Taliban ambush which led to the Kunduz airstrike on September 4, 2009. This chart represents the number of insurgent attacks from March 4, 2009 to March 4, 2010.

### Geographical Location of Attacks

It is difficult to assess whether the geographic location of attacks changed, because the media reports coming out of Kunduz often did not specify the precise location of the attacks. However, limited anecdotal evidence suggests there was little change. The most volatile areas were in Chahar Dara, Imam Sahib and Khananbar. According to the American captain stationed in Kunduz, most areas stayed the same and the worst areas may have even improved slightly after the strike.

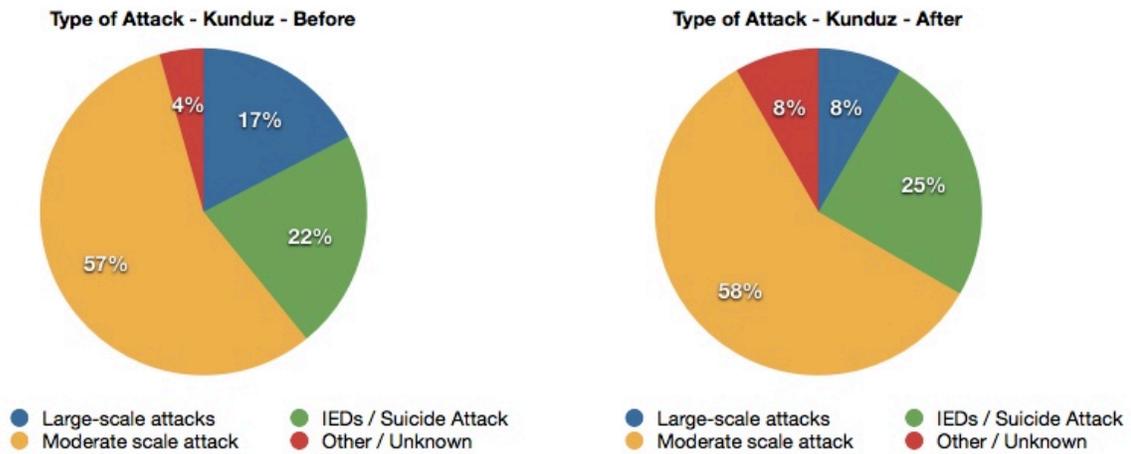
“I think the places that were bad continued to be bad, but maybe less so as far as activity,” he said. “And the rest of the areas—There was just less tension in the air, if you will.”<sup>201</sup>

### Scale of Attacks

The scale of the attacks stayed roughly the same in terms of the distribution of large-scale, moderate-scale and small-scale attacks. Insurgents continued to mount coordinated,

<sup>201</sup> Telephone interview, April 12, 2015.

complex attacks on Afghan security forces, even though the contingents used were moderate in size, not large. In any case, the scale of the attacks do not suggest that the Taliban were able to better carry out large-scale assaults after the airstrike nor does it suggest that the Taliban had to rely on IEDs and suicide attacks. Despite the fact the election was over, the Taliban launched two complex attacks on the ANP in the period after the airstrike.

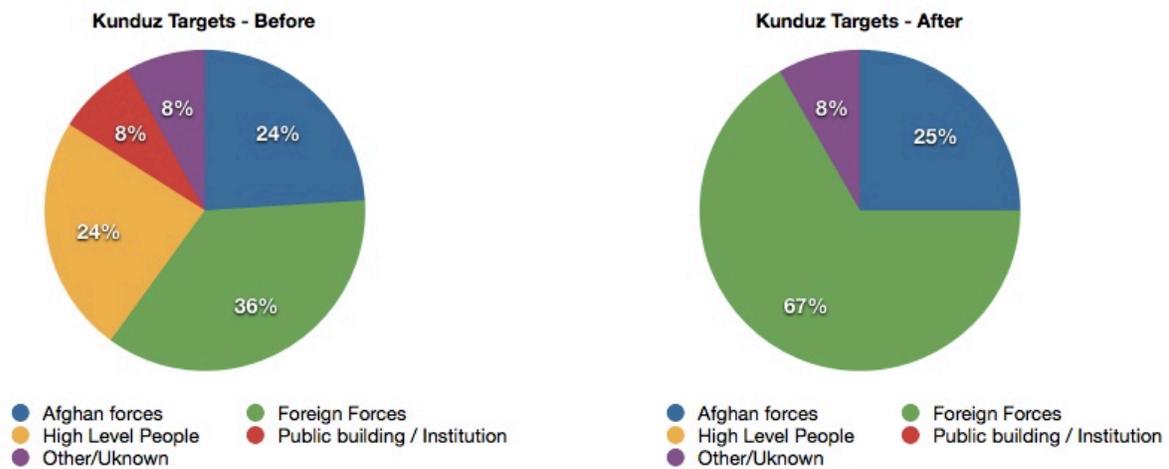


	Total attacks	Large-scale	IED / Suicide	Moderate-scale	Other / Unknown
Before	23	4	5	13	1
After	12	1	3	7	1

### Targets of Attacks

Before the airstrike, the targets of insurgent attacks were roughly evenly-distributed between Afghan forces, foreign forces and high-level targets like election candidates and prominent local officials, with a couple attacks on public buildings or institutions. After the

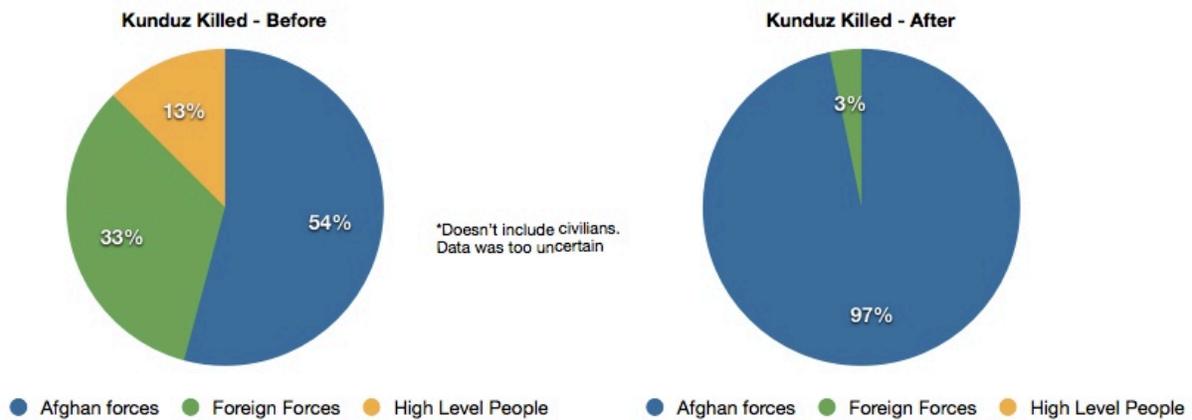
airstrike, insurgents seemed to stop targeting high-level people and public areas and focus their assaults on more conventional targets like Afghan and foreign forces. After the airstrike, foreign forces—mostly German troops—were more likely to be the targets of insurgent violence. This trend alone could indicate revenge attitudes. However, sources on the ground did not see it this way. They suggested that instead, the Germans were simply easier targets after the airstrike, perhaps because they were patrolling more frequently. This would also have to be explored further.



Targets	Afghan forces	Foreign Forces	High Level People	Public building / Institution	Other/Uknown
Before	6	9	6	2	2
After	3	8	0	0	1

That being said, the number of people who were killed in insurgent attacks tell a different story. Deaths from insurgent attacks were more evenly distributed between Afghan and foreign forces before the airstrike, although Afghan forces still bore the brunt of fatalities. However, in

the six months after the strike, Afghan forces bore the vast majority of fatalities—roughly 90 percent. Though insurgents may have been targeting foreign troops more, the Afghan forces, perhaps because they were less-equipped or not as well-trained, were still the most likely to die in insurgent-initiated attacks. There were also two complex attacks targeting the ANP after the airstrike which account for a large portion of the ANP deaths in the second period. Additionally, the lessening of restrictions on German troops may have left them better able to protect themselves in the period after the airstrike.



Killed	Afghan forces	Foreign Forces	High Level People
Before	13	8	3
After	30	1	0

### Kunduz Conclusions

Overall, the security landscape in Kunduz improved after the airstrike. Not only did the number of insurgent attacks decrease, but there was no indication from the scale, complexity, or targets of the attacks that the Taliban gained any extra capability as a result of the airstrike. Many

external factors may have influenced the drop in violence, including the end of fighting season, the end of election violence, the time that had elapsed since the beginning of the offensive down south, and the lessening of restrictions on German troops. At the same time, it is also possible that in Kunduz, unlike Farah, the airstrike itself discouraged violence. The unusual show of force by the previously conservative Germans may have helped pacify the local Taliban. More explanations for the difference between Farah and Kunduz will be explored in the next section. For now, suffice it to say that both the political and violent reaction to the airstrike in Kunduz were entirely different from Farah. The question is—why a mass-casualty airstrike in one province would lead to widespread backlash and an increase in violence, while in another province hit by a similar mass-casualty airstrike, life for most people continued on as usual.

In considering the lack of backlash to the deaths of up to a hundred civilians, one cannot help but feel disturbed by how quickly most people moved on in Kunduz. More often than not, the victims of the airstrike in Kunduz were blamed for their own fate. The intelligence officer who I spoke to concluded with the following statement: “I think I’ve said a hundred times, it was a shame how quickly we moved on from the civilian casualties in that region. War is never easy. Not to forget it is even more important.”

## **CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS**

Here we have examined two mass-casualty airstrikes in great detail, both of which resulted in vastly different political and security outcomes on the ground. In Farah, there was both local political unrest and a brief spike in insurgent violence. Whereas, in Kunduz, there was

virtually no political backlash and the security situation actually improved. In both cases, despite the high number of civilian deaths the airstrikes caused, international attention they received and the predictions that local security would deteriorate, the security landscape did not change fundamentally. Both the number of attacks and the character of insurgent violence stayed roughly the same. These two cases clearly demonstrate that the outcomes of airstrikes are both subtle and contingent upon the local conditions surrounding the airstrike.

What sort of conditions influence the outcomes of an airstrike? First of all, *the extent to which locals feel solidarity with the victims of the strike* matters. In Farah, women, children, and the elderly who were hiding from the fighting that was taken place around them were killed. There was particularly strong outrage over the deaths of these types of people. In Kunduz, it was mainly poor men, stealing the free fuel in the middle of the night for their families. As stated previously, there was a sense that the victims of the Kunduz airstrike were thieves and possibly Taliban sympathizers who should have known better than to go out at night and accept fuel from the Taliban. The victims of the Kunduz strike may have been just as innocent, and indeed their families suffered greatly, but these perceptions matter in determining how much outrage there is after an airstrike. Ethnic divisions and stereotypes also come into play here. The strike in Kunduz took place in a Pashtun-dominated area in a province where many Gilzai Pashtuns were often blamed for facilitating the resurgence of the Taliban. Geographic distance may also come into play. Some suggested that the villages were geographically so spread apart that a villagers may have felt far removed from what happened in the next hamlet over. Those who served in Kabul said that residents in urban areas tended to be more politically engaged. Then again, there have

been civilian casualty incidents in the past in Kunduz that have generated protests, so geographic distance is not the be-all-end-all of whether locals identify with the victims of an airstrike.

Second, the *reactions of both the Taliban and pro-government forces to the strike* can influence civilian attitudes. By this I am referring specifically to who is winning the information war on the ground. From my conversations with sources on the ground, it seems that the local spin battles matter more than the big information wars that play out on the national or international level, via large media outlets. I still do not know how the local Taliban in Farah reacted to the strike but all three of the military sources in Kunduz pointed out that the Taliban was doing little to nothing to spread information about the airstrike. By contrast, local American troops had developed a message that they would spread as they were patrolling local areas. When asked whether the reaction to the airstrike would have been different if the local Taliban had engaged in the spin battle, one of the sources I spoke to replied, “Absolutely.”

Third, *previous attitudes toward the Taliban and pro-government forces* matter. Both Farah and Kunduz, although they were experiencing a resurgence of the Taliban were not key Taliban strongholds like Kandahar. This may have influenced the limited change in the security landscapes of both provinces. Kunduz historically has been more anti-Taliban with its Northern Alliance history. Because the Germans were seen as weak in Kunduz, the reaction to the airstrike was generally one of relief. People thought the German troops were finally going to get tough on the Taliban. One could imagine that in an area where the coalition forces were known for inflicting civilian casualties that the reaction to a coalition-led airstrike would be more negative. Perhaps the fact that Farah had experienced several high-profile civilian casualty incidents in 2008 influenced the reaction to the 2009 airstrike in Granai.

Finally, the *political efficacy of locals* matters. In order to make the decision, as residents in Farah did, to transport bodies to the provincial governor's office or stage a protest in the provincial capital, residents must feel that they have a sense of agency in the political process. This may, for example, be influenced by the extent to which their actions are supported by government officials. In Farah, the outspoken statements of members of Parliament, the governor, and Hamid Karzai may have helped encourage locals to voice their outrage. The greater focus that the Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team paid to resolving local disputes may also have also helped increase the political efficacy of Farah citizens.

All of the factors listed above would influence the extent of the political and violent reaction to an airstrike. They could influence security outcomes through any of the mechanisms identified at the outset of this paper. If Condra, Felter, Iyengar, and Shapiro were right in their assessment that revenge is a driving factor in the violence after a civilian casualty incident, then these factors would influence the security landscape after an airstrike because they would influence the extent to which local civilians are motivated to take revenge. The extent to which locals feel solidarity with the victims of an airstrike is most likely to influence whether locals consider the airstrike to be a "tipping point" in a long string of injustices. Local spin battles are most likely to influence the outbreak of nationalist sentiment.

Violence that is driven by the desire among insurgents to prove their resilience may depend on the *sophistication of the Taliban cells* in question. The Taliban cells in Kunduz, which showed little aptitude for psychological operations and generally carried out spontaneous rather than orchestrated attacks, may not have made that calculation.

Overall, the fact that the changes in the security landscape were not as dramatic as predicted may attest to the fact that local civilians are less likely to jump on the bandwagon of either the Taliban or pro-government forces than we generally expect. Classical counterinsurgency theory puts heavy emphasis on winning over those who are sitting on the fence, uncommitted to either side. However, perhaps those very same people, when it comes right down to it, just want to be left alone.

The implications of this study for the current air campaigns in Iraq and Syria are debatable. Iraq and Syria in 2015 are very different theaters of war than Afghanistan in 2009, with a very different set of insurgents. It is also important to keep in mind that both Farah and Kunduz were on the periphery of the war in Afghanistan, with the hottest areas of violence being down south. However, if the main takeaway from this study is that the outcomes of airstrikes are highly dependent upon local conditions, then it follows that perhaps it will not be so easy to conduct counterinsurgency from the air without a deep understanding of the communities we are targeting. Recent attempts to contain the Islamic State while maintaining a small footprint abroad and protecting our ground troops may be noble from an American perspective, but misguided for the war effort as a whole. Low ground troops presence means less control over the local spin battles. It also means less control over the previous attitudes of victims of a strike toward foreign forces. It is difficult to build trust with local civilians if you're 50,000 feet above them dropping bombs. So far, there has been little transparency as to the effects of the bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria, though stories of civilian casualties are starting to emerge. Only time will tell what effects the current air campaign has on local Syrian and Iraqi communities.

## REFERENCES

- “11-16 - Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook: Farah Province.” United States Army Combined Arms Center. February 2011. Web. 20 March 2015. p. 7.
- “Afghan daily calls for compensation for victims of foreign forces' operations.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 28 May 2009. Text of editorial. "Investigating Balabolok incident," published by Afghan newspaper Daily Afghanistan, part of the Afghanistan newspaper group on 27 May. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- “Afghan daily calls for end to foreign military bombing raids.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 14 May 2009. Excerpt from article by Harun entitled: "Banning foreign military bombing raids is people's only main demand" by state-owned Afghan newspaper Hewad on 12 May. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- “Afghan daily stresses need to legalize presence of foreign forces.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 10 May 2009. Text of editorial in Pashto. "How can foreign forces be put on legal footing?" published by pro-government Afghan newspaper Weesa on 9 May. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Afghan death toll unclear; Afghan official says 95 children killed in U. S.-Taliban battle.” *The Times & Transcript* (New Brunswick). 14 May 2009. News. p. C11. LexisNexis

Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Afghan MPs call for legalizing foreign forces' presence.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 8 May 2009. Text of report by state-

owned National Afghanistan TV on 8 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Afghan paper details Taleban drug routes.” Cheragh. 22 May 2008.

“Afghan police official questions ‘free’ insurgent movement across Iranian border.” Tolo TV. 10 January 2009.

“Afghan rights body blames both Taleban, foreign forces for civilian deaths.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 17 May 2009. Text of

report by Afghan independent Tolo TV on 16 May. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Afghanistan: Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2008.” January 2009. United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit. Kabul.

“Afghanistan: Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2009.” January 2010. United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit. Kabul.

“Afghanistan: Annual Report 2010: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.” March 2011. United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit and The Afghan

Independent Human Rights Commission. Kabul.

- “Afghanistan: Annual Report 2011: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.” February 2012.  
United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit and UN Office of  
the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Kabul.
- “Afghanistan: Annual Report 2012: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.” February 2013.  
United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, Human Rights Unit and UN Office of  
the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Kabul.
- “Afghanistan: Left in the dark: Failures of accountability for civilian casualties caused by  
international military operations in Afghanistan.” Amnesty International. 11 August 2014.
- “Afghans protest over Farah deaths.” *Aljazeera.net*. 7 May 2009. LexisNexus Academic. Web.  
Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- “Airstrike kills nine Afghan police mistaken for Taliban.” *The Irish Times*. 21 July 2008.
- “Al-Arabiya interviews UK spokesman. Afghan analyst on situation in Afghanistan.” *BBC  
Monitoring Middle East - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 8  
September 2009. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- Arnoldy, Ben. “NATO airstrike in Afghanistan overshadows drop in casualties.” *Christian  
Science Monitor*. 4 September 2009. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed:  
2014/10/20.
- Baltrusaitis, Daniel. 2008. “Airpower: The Flip Side of COIN.” *Georgetown Journal of  
International Affairs*.
- Biddle, Stephen D. 2006. “Allies, Airpower and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in  
Afghanistan and Iraq.” *International Security*. Vol. 30. No. 3.

Blanchfield, Mike. "‘New thinking’ needed, U.S. fires top soldier in Afghanistan; Experienced general replaced by one with cloak-and-dagger talents." *Edmonton Journal* (Alberta). 12 May 2009, News. A4. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Boone, Jon. "Region in crisis: The victims: ‘Neither the army nor police gave us a chance to escape.’" *The Guardian*. London. 7 May 2009. Guardian International Pages. p. 17. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Boyes, Roger. "General has to quit after video reveals airstrike blunder that killed civilians." *The Times*. London. News. p. 47. 27 November 2009. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Bumiller, Elisabeth and Carlotta Gall. "Officials Say U.S. Raids Killed Some Afghan Civilians." *The New York Times*. 8 May 2009. Section A. Column 0. Foreign Desk. p. 4. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. "Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike." *The Washington Post*. 6 September 2009. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Cockburn, Patrick. "‘120 die’ as US bombs village; Afghan outrage after strike targeting Taliban fighters hits women and children Clinton expresses ‘deep regret.’" *The Independent* (London). 7 May 2009. News. p. 20. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Cockburn, Patrick. "Afghans riot over air-strike atrocity; Witnesses say deaths of 147 people in three villages came after a sustained bombardment by American aircraft." *The Independent* (London), 8 May 2009. World. p. 20. LexisNexus Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Condra, Luke N., Joseph H. Felter, Radha K. Iyengar, and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2010. *The effect of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq*. No. w16152. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Constable, Pamela. "Afghan Reaction To Strike Muted; Anger at Taliban, Apology by U.S. Deflect The Usual Outrage Over Civilian Deaths." *The Washington Post*. 8 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Cordesman, Anthony H. 2008. "Air Combat Trends in the Afghan and Iraq Wars." Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Coughlin, Con. "This uneasy alliance may be our only hope in the war on terror; Getting Afghanistan and Pakistan to work together is vital for Obama." *The Daily Telegraph* (London). 8 May 2009. Features. Comment. p. 28, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Dadkhah, Lara M. 2008. "Close Air Support and Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan." *Small Wars Journal*.

Demmer Ulrike and Shoib Najafizada. "Reaction to Deadly Airstrike: Afghan Provincial Governor Praises German Army." *Der Spiegel*. 7 September 2009.

Dempsey, Judy and Nicholas Kulish. "As Criticism Mounts, Germany Defends Decision on Afghan Airstrike." *The New York Times*. 8 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Dreazen, Yochi. "NATO Says Strike Hit 30 Civilians." *The Wall Street Journal*. 17 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

DuPée, Matthew C. "Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province." Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS - Online Journal. The Naval Postgraduate School. 1 November 2009. Web. 10 April 2015. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Eisler, David F. 2012. "Counter-IED Strategy in Modern War." *Military Review*: 9-15. *Cimic Web*.

Executive Summary: U.S. Central Command Directed Investigation into Civilian Casualties in Farah Province, Afghanistan on 4 May 2009.

"Farah Province." *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS - Home*. The Naval Postgraduate School. 3 February 2009. Web. 20 March 2015.

Farrell, Stephen and Richard A. Ooppel Jr. "NATO Strike Magnifies Divide on Afghan War." *The New York Times*. 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Felter, Joe. "Airstrikes Can Only Do So Much to Combat ISIS." *The New York Times*. 14 Aug. 2014. Web.

Fitzgerald, David. 2013. *Learning to Forget US Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.

Freedberg, Sydney J. 2010. "The Afghanistan Air War." *National Journal*. <http://www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/the-afghanistan-air-war-20100925> (accessed November 30, 2014).

Gall, Carlotta and Taimoor Shah. "Airstrikes brought horror, Afghan villagers say; Toll may never be known after U.S. bombs tear families to shreds." *The International Herald*

*Tribune*. 15 May 2009. News. p. 1. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Gall, Carlotta. "Taliban revival highlights hard choices in war; In Afghanistan, security has unraveled even in peaceful northern region." *The International Herald Tribune*. 27 November 2009 Friday: 1097 words. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Gall, Carlotta. "U.S. envoy vows to limit air casualties." *The International Herald Tribune*. 20 May 2009. News. p. 5. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Galula, David. 1964. *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice*. New York: Praeger.

Gentile, Gian P. 2013. *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*. New York: The New Press.

*German Air Strike Near Kunduz – A Year After: Evaluation of Judicial Reactions and Further Information*. Berlin: European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights. 2010. p.3.

"German daily says country pledges full probe into Afghan raid." *BBC Monitoring Europe - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 7 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

"Germany faces heat over deadly air strike; Troops feared attack by Taliban fighters." *Ottawa Citizen*. 8 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

"Germany's Bundeswehr chief of staff defends Kunduz air strike." *BBC Monitoring Europe - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 13 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

- “Germany urges outsiders to hold criticism of Afghan airstrike pending investigation.” *Guelph Mercury*. Ontario, Canada. 7 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- Giustozzi, Antonio and Niamatullah Ibrahimi. 2012. “Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of Anti-Government Mobilization in Afghanistan, 1978-2011.” Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (January).
- Grant, Rebecca. "Air Power Is Right for This Mission in Iraq." *The New York Times*. 14 Aug. 2014. Web.
- Hutchinson, Bill. “Afghan Officials Say NATO Bombs Killed Civilians.” *Daily News*. New York. 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- International Security Assistance Force Headquarters. "Tactical Directive." 6 July 2009. Kabul, Afghanistan.
- International Security Assistance Force Headquarters. "Tactical Directive." 30 December 2009. Kabul, Afghanistan.
- “Karzai demands US air strikes end.” *Aljazeera.net*. 8 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- Kilcullen, David. 2009. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Kocher, M. A., T.B. Pepinsky, and S.N. Kalyvas. 2011. “Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 55: 201–218.
- “Kunduz raid 'killed 30 civilians.’” [Aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net). 13 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

- Kuzmarov, Jeremy. 2013. "Afghanistan, Part 1—'You Have to Not Mind Killing Innocents': American COIN Operations in Afghanistan and the Violence of Empire." *Hearts and Minds: A People's History of Counterinsurgency*. Comp. Hannah Gurman. New York: The New Press.
- Lyall, Jason, Graeme Blair, and Kosuke Imai. 2013. "Explaining support for combatants during wartime: A survey experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review* 107.04: 679-705.
- Lyall, Jason and Isaiah Wilson III. 2009. "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars." *International Organization*. Vol. 63. No. 1. Cambridge University Press, pp. 67-106.
- Lyall, Jason. 2014. "Process Tracing, Causal Inference, and Civil War." In *Process Tracing in the Social Sciences: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, eds. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Strategies for Social Inquiry Series, 2014), pp.186-207.
- Lyall, Jason. 2014. "Bombing to Lose? Airpower and the Dynamics of Coercion in Counterinsurgency Wars"
- M. Mohsin. "Afghanistan: foreboding of failure." *The Nation* (AsiaNet). 23 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.
- Matwiczak, Kenneth. 2009. "A Comprehensive Database of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan." Report to the Congressional Research Service. The LBJ School of Public Affairs. The University of Texas at Austin.

“McChrystal makes Afghan TV address.” [Aljazeera.net](http://Aljazeera.net). 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

McFate, Montgomery, J.D., Ph.D. 2005. "Iraq: The Social Context of IEDs." *Military Review*: 37-40. Office of Naval Research, Arlington VA.

McNern, Ethan. “US military's top man in Afghanistan out after less than a year.” *Scotsman*. 12 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Merkel ally resigns over Afghan deaths.” *The Gazette*. Montreal. 28 November 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Merkel to face Parliament over deadly Afghan air strike that killed 70 civilians.” *The Daily Star*. Lebanon. 8 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Motlagh, Jason. "The Bombing at Bala Baluk." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. 1 Apr. 2010. Web. 28 Mar. 2015.

Nagl, J. A., Amos, J. F., Sewall, S., & Petraeus, D. H. 2008. *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (No. 3-24). University of Chicago Press.

“NATO airstrike on Afghan fuel tankers kills 9.” *Irish Examiner*. 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Nato begins Afghan bombing inquiry.” [Aljazeera.net](http://Aljazeera.net). 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Obama adviser: U.S. will not end Afghan airstrikes.” *Daily Camera* (Boulder, Colorado), 11 May 2009. Section A: Daily Camera. p. 3, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Officials say dispatch of additional forces to Afghanistan ineffective.” Afghan Islamic Press news agency. December 28, 2008.

Oppel, Richard A. and Abdul Waheed Wafa. “80 Afghans killed in NATO airstrike; Taliban-hijacked trucks were target, but civilians reportedly among dead.” *The International Herald Tribune*. 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Pape, Robert A. 2004. "The True Worth of Air Power." *Foreign Affairs*. 83.

Peck, Allen G. 2007. “Airpower’s Crucial Role in Irregular Warfare.” *Air & Space Power Journal*.

Perito, Robert M. 2009. “Afghanistan’s Police: The Weak Link in Security Sector Reform.” United States Institute for Peace Special Report 227 (August).

["Province: Farah."](#) *Program for Culture & Conflict Studies*. [Naval Postgraduate School](#)(NPS). February 3, 2009.

"Province: Kunduz," *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS*. The Naval Postgraduate School. 15 November 2011. Web. 10 April 2015.

Province: Kunduz," *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS*. The Naval Postgraduate School, 15 September 2009. Web. 10 April 2015.

"Regional Command West." *Understandingwar.org*. Institute for the Study of War, n.d. Web. 23 Mar. 2015.

Saber, Shapoor; Fetrat Zerak and Abaceen Nasimi. “Air strike on Afghanistan -- an eyewitness account.” *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas). Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune News Service. 11 June 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Sahak, Abdul Latif. "Taliban posting gains in northern Afghanistan." *The Monitor*. McAllen, Texas. 15 July 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Salarzai, Ameen. "Attack by NATO kills at least 90 Afghans." *Sydney Morning Herald*. Australia. 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Schmitt, Eric and Mark Mazzetti. "Switch Signals New Path for Afghan War." *The New York Times*. 13 May 2009. Section A. Column 0. Foreign Desk. p. 12, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Schmitt, Eric and Thom Shanker. "U.S. inquiry faults Afghan airstrikes; Airmen failed to follow rules in civilian bombing, military concludes." *The International Herald Tribune*. 3 June 2009. News. p. 1, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

"Scores dead in Nato raid on Kunduz." Aljazeera. 5 September 2009.

"Scores dead in Nato raid on Kunduz." *Times of Oman*. Published on [Aljazeera.net](http://Aljazeera.net). 4 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Sengupta, Kim and David Usborne. "Rift with Karzai worsens as 95 perish in Nato air strike; Deadly attack undermines politicians' attempts to convince public that Afghan war is worth fighting." *The Independent*. London. News. p. 4. 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Sengupta, Kim. "British hostage is saved - but at cost of Afghan colleague's life; Daring strike by special forces frees journalist from Taliban clutches but deaths lead to angry recriminations in Kabul." *The Independent*. London. 10 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Shah, Taimoor and Carlotta Gall. "Afghans Say U.S. Raids Killed 30 Civilians." *The New York Times*. 6 May 2009. Section A. Column 0. Foreign Desk. p. 12. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Shah, Taimoor and Carlotta Gall. "Air raids kill scores of Afghan villagers; Local official puts toll at about 100 civilians; Red Cross blames U.S." *The International Herald Tribune*. 7 May 2009. News. p. 8, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Shah, Taimoor and Carlotta Gall. "Civilian Deaths Imperil Support For Afghan War." *The New York Times*. 7 May 2009. Section A. Column 0. Foreign Desk. p. 1. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Shah, Taimoor and Carlotta Gall. "Red Cross confirms civilian Afghan deaths." *The International Herald Tribune*. 7 May 2009. News. p. 4, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Sharafyar, Sharafuddin. "Cargo of corpses delivered as proof of Afghan civilian deaths in U.S. air raids." *The Toronto Star*. Reuters News Agency. 6 May 2009. News; p. A06. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

"Sowing moral confusion about Afghanistan." *The National Post*. Canada. Editorial. pg. A12. 8 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Swain, Jon and Jerome Starkey. "Villagers slain as they took cover; Afghanistan Grieving civilians contradict American claims that the scores of victims of a devastating airstrike were insurgents." *The Sunday Times* (London). 14 June 2009. News. p. 22. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Taleban accuse US forces of killing more than 30 civilians in Afghan west.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 5 May 2009. Text of report by Afghan Taleban Voice of Jihad website on 5 May. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Taleban call for independent probe into use of white phosphorous in Afghanistan.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 12 May 2009. Text of “Statement by Islamic Emirate regarding the use of phosphorous,” posted on Afghan Taleban Voice of Jihad website on 12 May. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Taleban deny using phosphorus in Afghan west.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 11 May 2009. Excerpt from report by private Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Taleban say 150 civilians killed or wounded in Afghan bombing.” *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political*. Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. 6 May 2009. Text of report "The number of civilian casualties as a result of savage bombardment by the American forces has reached 150" by Afghan Taleban Voice of Jihad website on 6 May. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Talev, Margaret and Warren P. Strobel. “Obama pledges 'lasting commitment' to Pakistan, Afghanistan.” Knight Ridder Washington Bureau, distributed by McClatchy-Tribune News Service. 6 May 2009, LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“Up to 100 dead' in US-Afghan raid.” *Aljazeera.net*. 7 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web.

Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“US air strikes kill dozens of Afghan civilians.” *Guardian.com*. 6 May 2009. LexisNexis

Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“US plays down Farah raid death toll.” *Aljazeera.net*. 20 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web.

Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“US probe 'confirms' Afghan deaths.” *Aljazeera.net*. 8 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web.

Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“US raid 'kills Afghan civilians.’” *Aljazeera.net*. 5 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date

Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“US 'regrets' Afghan deaths.” *Aljazeera.net*. 7 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date

Accessed: 2014/10/20.

“US to investigate Afghan deaths.” *Aljazeera.net*. 6 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date

Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Vick, Alan J., Adam Grissom, William Rosenau, Beth Grill, and Karl P. Mueller. 2006. “Air

Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions.” Santa Monica: Rand.

“Village burying its dead after air strike; NATO jet sets off fireball which kills up to 90 Taliban and civilians.” *Morning Star*. Foreign Desk. 5 September 2009. LexisNexis Academic.

Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Washington, Ewen MacAskill. "Dozens of Afghans killed in US air raid: Final death toll could be worst since 2001 invasion: Inquiry promise as Obama meets Karzai and Zardari." *The Guardian*. 6 May 2009. p. 19. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.

Youssef, Nancy A. "U.S. says airstrike killed 50 Afghans, most of them insurgents." *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune News Service. 8 May 2009. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2014/10/20.