

Afghan Battles See Higher Toll for Civilians

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April 19, 2006

New York Times

KABUL, Afghanistan, April 18 — More than 20 Afghan civilians have been reported killed or wounded in the last three days by Afghan and American security forces as the troops have fought an outbreak of insurgent activity, Afghan officials said Tuesday.

The officials said American soldiers shot up a car on Monday night in Khost, in eastern Afghanistan, wounding three women and a new-born girl returning from a hospital. A man and a 7-year-old boy were wounded Tuesday in a shooting by American soldiers on the edge of Khost, the provincial police chief, Col. Muhammad Ayub, said in a telephone interview.

Two American soldiers were wounded Tuesday by a roadside bomb in Zabul Province, in the south, a military spokesman said. Police and military officials also reported killing five insurgents in Kunar Province, near the Pakistan border.

The Kunar operation had already caused civilian casualties. The United States military has announced an investigation into an airstrike there on Saturday night that killed seven civilians and wounded three. Four of the dead were children, the provincial governor, Asadullah Wafa, said Tuesday by telephone.

American military officials had predicted an increase in violence with the melting of winter snows. But many recent incidents have been cases of soldiers firing on colleagues, or of civilians wounded by American forces.

In the two shooting incidents in Khost on Monday and Tuesday, American patrols fired on civilian cars that failed to slow down or stop, Colonel Ayub said.

In one incident, American soldiers were conducting routine checks for mines and roadside bombs when a small truck approached and failed to stop. A man and his son were wounded, he said.

An American military spokeswoman in Kabul, Lt. Tamara Lawrence, confirmed that two males had been wounded in the legs when soldiers fired on them and had been treated at an American medical facility. She said she had no information about the shooting of women.

The women were wounded at 11 p.m. Monday as they returned to their home in Yakubi from the local hospital, where one of them had just given birth to a baby girl, said the district administrator of Yakubi, Mirza Jan Nimghari. American soldiers opened fire on the car, wounding the mother and her baby, and the grandmother of the baby and a third woman. The male driver, a relative, escaped unharmed, he said.

Mr. Nimghari said he complained to the local American commander, and the commander had promised to investigate. "The people are angry," he said, "but I told them they should not get angry since the coalition commander promised to investigate and not let the issue drop."

The heavy civilian cost in Saturday's bombing has already caused President [Hamid Karzai](#) to order an investigation by Afghan security forces. "The killing of civilians is not acceptable by any means," his spokesman, Karim Rahimi, said, adding that Mr. Karzai "ordered that it not be allowed to happen again."