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Kabul drone strike was CIA-military murder

A *New York Times* analysis of the August 29 US drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan, based on military-intelligence sources as well as interviews with survivors and co-workers of the victims, demonstrates that the incineration of ten members of an Afghan family, including seven children, was a wanton act of mass murder.

Despite claims by General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the attack followed a rigorous protocol and was a “righteous strike,” the *Times* report, published September 11, indicates that every step, from the initial identification of the target to the final decision to launch, was carried out in a reckless fashion, entirely indifferent to the human consequences. Every stereotype of punch-button, remote-control warfare is confirmed.

Military-intelligence sources admitted to the *Times* that they did not know the identity of the driver of the white Toyota Corolla when they gave the orders to strike it with a Hellfire missile, nor did they know who lived in the home where the car had just stopped in the courtyard. The decision to attack was based entirely on the “pattern” of conduct by the driver, who allegedly visited an Islamic State-Khorasan (ISIS-K) “safe house,” and was later seen loading heavy objects carefully into his car, in a way that supposedly suggested bomb materials (they were actually water canisters).



US MQ-9 Reaper Drone (Image credit: U.S. Air Force/Paul Ridgeway public domain)

The initial claims from the Pentagon were that four ISIS-K militants had been killed, along with three civilians, and that a secondary blast, much larger than the first, had taken place, indicating that the US missile had caused a large cache of explosives to detonate. The actual toll was three adults and seven children, six of them ten or younger, and there was no secondary explosion.

The prime target of the attack, Zemari Ahmadi, the driver of a vehicle that was supposedly being prepared to carry out a bomb attack on US forces at the Kabul airport, was actually a long-time employee of a California-based aid group, Nutrition and Education International. He and another victim, his cousin Naser, had applied to the US Embassy for refugee status in the United States, fearing they would be targeted by the Taliban because they worked for an American non-governmental organization. Instead, they were murdered by the US government.

Ahmadi had gone to his job at the group's office in Kabul, a longtime location of a US-based organization which would certainly have been known to the US Embassy and US intelligence services, and in the course of the day loaded his car with canisters of water for his family and neighbors, because there was no water service there in the chaos following the collapse of the Afghan government.

When he returned home, which he and his three brothers and their families shared, in the fashion typical of Afghanistan, the children ran out to welcome him—and all were

incinerated in the fireball caused by the detonation of a Hellfire missile launched by a circling drone.

The victims included Ahmadi, 43; his sons, Zamir, 20, Faisal, 16, and Farzad, 10; three nephews, Arwin, 7, Benyamin, 6, and Hayat, 2; his cousin Naser, 30; and two 3-year-old girls, Malika and Somaya, whose relationship to the family is unclear.

According to information supplied to the *Times* by military-intelligence sources, Ahmadi was initially identified as a potential target because on his way to work he stopped at a home that had been identified as a “safe house” for ISIS-K, the terrorist group that carried out a suicide bomb attack August 27 at the Kabul airport, killing 13 US soldiers and at least 170 Afghan civilians.

Ahmadi reportedly made three stops on his way to work, two to pick up co-workers, one to visit the home of his boss, the director of the Kabul branch of Nutrition and Education International. How any of these locations—all belonging to employees of a US-based charity—could be identified by US intelligence as havens for terrorism was not explained.

The actual decision to fire at this alleged ISIS-K target was equally unexplained. According to the *Times*, “Although the target was now inside a densely populated residential area, the drone operator quickly scanned and saw only a single adult male greeting the vehicle, and therefore assessed with ‘reasonable certainty’ that no women, children or noncombatants would be killed, U.S. officials said.”

Eyewitness accounts gave a diametrically opposed picture. The *Times* report continues:

But according to his relatives, as Mr. Ahmadi pulled into his courtyard, several of his children and his brothers’ children came out, excited to see him, and sat in the car as he backed it inside. Mr. Ahmadi’s brother Romal was sitting on the ground floor with his wife when he heard the sound of the gate opening, and Mr. Ahmadi’s car entering. His adult cousin Naser had gone to fetch water for his ablutions, and greeted him.

The car’s engine was still running when there was a sudden blast, and the room was sprayed with shattered glass from the window, Romal recalled. He staggered to his feet. “Where are the children?” he asked his wife. “They’re outside,” she replied.

The report on the Kabul drone strike does more than expose the monstrous carnage for which the US military-intelligence apparatus is responsible in this instance. There are countless such episodes over the past two decades, always justified in the same fashion: US intelligence identified a terrorist “operative” or “facilitator,” the “pattern of activities” indicated that an attack on a US target was “imminent,” the strike was carried out in a fashion calculated to “minimize civilian casualties,” and all of these actions were taken on the basis of “reasonable certainty.”

Most of these drone-missile strikes have been carried out in rural areas or remote towns inaccessible to media investigation, unlike the Kabul strike which was conducted, in a sense, with the whole world watching. But there is no doubt that if a serious investigation were conducted into any of thousands of such missile strikes, which have incinerated tens of thousands of people in an area stretching from Central Asia to North Africa, the results would be similar to those found by the *Times* in Kabul.

American imperialism is, in the full sense of the word, a gigantic criminal enterprise. Its leaders should be tried, convicted and punished to the fullest. And its apologists—like the *Times* itself, on 364 out of 365 days every year—should be branded as such. One day’s truth cannot outweigh the years of deliberate lying and cover-up that have served to conceal from the American people the reality of the imperialist “war on terror.”

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