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\$50,000 Each: US Pays Blood Money for Kandahar Massacre

By Jason Ditz

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While the official statements in the US surrounding the March 11 Kandahar massacre make a point to present it as an isolated incident, and one that is absolutely not going to change policy, inside Afghanistan the [US military is doing very much what it always does when it kills civilians: cut a check to the relatives.](#)

The payments this time are considerably larger than normal, perhaps owing to the extremely high profile of the massacre and the number of children involved. Families are being paid \$50,000 per slain Afghan and \$11,000 each for the wounded, meaning a payout of \$916,000.

The practice of US and [other NATO members](#) paying “blood money” to the victims of massacres, night raids and assorted air strikes has been controversial. The US military in particular has often made a show of [paying extremely trivial sums under the rationale that Afghan civilians would exaggerate the tolls](#) of massacres to up the payout.

This has had the side effect of the victims [often rejecting the “blood money” payment on general principle](#), something the US clearly couldn’t afford to have happen in this high profile case.

The wild variation in the value of a human life by US estimations certainly will remain a subject of discussion. Many Afghans have been offered \$2,000 for the lives of family members in past killings, and even the \$50,000 offered in this case is [dramatically less than the Raymond Davis](#)

murders payout, \$2.34 million for two victims. In the end such payments are an attempt to buy silence, and silence is clearly getting more expensive in Afghanistan.