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Man With Ties to Karzai Dies in a Military Raid

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A special operations raid meant to disrupt a Taliban arms operation in southern Afghanistan ended in the death of a man with family ties to the Afghan president's inner circle, leading to tensions between regional officials and the military, officials say.

The conflict comes at a time of growing tensions over American Special Operations forces in the country, after President Hamid Karzai recently banned their operation in a critical province near the capital. And it highlighted a complex web of Afghan family and factional relations that has led provincial officials allied with Mr. Karzai to defend men that international military officials have identified as insurgents.

The raid, a joint mission involving Afghan commandos and American Special Forces advisers, happened Sunday night near the capital of Oruzgan Province, Tirin Kot. Military officials said the target was a Taliban weapons broker named Hajji Janan.

During the operation, troops shot and killed Mr. Janan's brother, Khirullah Janan, after entering a residential compound to search for weapons. According to a statement by the international

military coalition, soldiers fired only after being fired on by an “insurgent.” After finding weapons and ammunition in the compound, they then arrested Hajji Janan, the statement said.

But the influential provincial governor and the police chief both dispute that account. Shortly after Mr. Janan’s arrest, they intervened to secure his release, and it is now unclear whether he will face any charges. Both officials released statements criticizing the military as having targeted innocent men and expressing outrage that the raid had not been coordinated with them.

“We asked the coalition forces to provide us with evidence that Hajji Janan was involved in weapons business and to show us the weapons and munitions that they say they have seized in his house, but so far they have not provided us with any evidence,” said Matiullah Khan, the Oruzgan provincial police chief.

The provincial governor, Mullah Amir Akhundzad, insisted that there was no proof that Khirallah Janan had been armed or involved with the Taliban, and condemned what he called a civilian death in a military action.

Both officials in Oruzgan Province are close allies of Mr. Karzai. The presidential palace did not return messages.

It was complaints by a provincial governor about American Special Operations forces that led to the recent tensions between Mr. Karzai and his American allies. Mr. Karzai banned all American commandos from the province — Wardak, a strategic and dangerous region near the capital — and it took weeks for American and Afghan officials to reach a compromise on restoring even limited operations there.

Over the last week, Mr. Karzai criticized an American airstrike that led to the killing of at least 10 children during an Afghan-led military raid against a Taliban stronghold in Kunar Province. The airstrike was reported to have been called in by American Special Forces advisers to the Afghan military, as Mr. Karzai has forbidden Afghan forces from calling for airstrikes.

Afghan officials said that civilian casualties were an issue in a teleconference between Mr. Karzai and President Obama on Wednesday. But the White House briefing about the conference did not mention the issue.

The often-confusing web of family and political relations in southern Afghanistan presents another potential complication in the Special Operations raid in Oruzgan, a critical province bordering the Taliban heartland.

Khiraullah Janan, who was killed by troops, is the brother-in-law of a Karzai adviser, Mohammed Qaseem, an influential figure within Mr. Karzai's Populzai tribe and a crucial liaison between the president and tribal leaders in southern Afghanistan. Mr. Qaseem is also a cousin of Mr. Khan, the police chief.

Mr. Qaseem could not be reached for comment.