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## Afghan civilians reportedly killed in NATO airstrike

October 5, 2013

At least five civilians, including three children, targeted while hunting for birds, local officials say.



Foreign troops, part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, investigate the site of an assault on an international compound in Kabul, May 25, 2013

At least five civilians, including three children, were killed overnight in a NATO airstrike in eastern Afghanistan after they went hunting for birds with air guns, local officials said Saturday.

"Last night around 11:00 pm, five civilians aged between 12 and 20 carrying air guns wanted to go hunting birds some eight kilometers (five miles) from the center of the city of Jalalabad. They were targeted and killed by a foreign forces airstrike," said Hazrat Hussain Mashreqiwal, a provincial police spokesman.

A NATO spokesman said Afghan and Coalition forces had responded to an attack with a "precision strike" and that "initial reports indicate there were no civilian casualties."

Civilian deaths have been a source of friction between the Afghan government and U.S.-led NATO troops, who are winding down operations as they prepare to withdraw by the end of 2014.

Lt. Col. Will Griffin told Agence France-Presse that "while we are still assessing the situation, our initial reports indicate there were no civilian casualties".

"We can confirm that Afghan and Coalition forces responded to an attack and conducted a coordinated precision strike against insurgents in Behsud district, Nangarhar province yesterday," he said.

Mohammad Atif Shinwari, a spokesman for the Nangarhar education department, said that three of the victims were school children and two were brothers.

Last month, a NATO airstrike killed at least 16 civilians, including women and children in neighboring Kunar province in eastern Afghanistan, according to local officials.

The airstrike hit a pickup truck and killed all on board, Afghan officials said. NATO said the strike had killed armed fighters.

Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed in Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion.

Also on Saturday, a roadside bomb ripped through a civilian vehicle in the western province of Farah killing at least three people, including a tribal elder.

"Unfortunately, three civilians, including an influential tribal elder, his son and a relative were killed in the explosion," said Abdul Rahman Zhawandai, provincial spokesman.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but roadside bombs have been the Taliban weapon of choice.

As Afghan security forces take charge of security responsibility countrywide, violence has risen.

More than 1,000 civilians were killed and around 2,000 others were injured in the first half of 2013, according to a U.N. report, a 23 percent increase from the same period last year.