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<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/13/us-dispatched-a-murderous-ac-130-airborne-gunship-to-attack-a-hospital/>

US Dispatched a Murderous AC-130 Airborne Gunship to Attack a Hospital

by Dave Lindorff

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The Air Force's top killing machine, the AC-130J, was sent to attack the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz.

Evidence continues to mount that the US committed a monstrous war crime in attacking and destroying a fully operational hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan on the night of Oct. 3, killing at least 22 people including at least 12 members of the volunteer medical staff of Medicine Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), the French based international aid organization that operated the hospital.

This even as the US desperately tries to bury the issue of its perfidy by offering “condolence payments” to victims of the attack, though without accepting blame beyond saying it was a “tragic mistake.”

The “mistake” claim looks increasingly shameless as it becomes clear that this was not, as the US corporate media continue to incorrectly report, a “bombing” gone wrong, but rather was a prolonged hour-long attack by an AC-130 gunship, the deadliest killing machine in the US Air Force’s weapons roster of mayhem. The aircraft, equipped with the latest night-vision sighting equipment, reportedly made five 15-minute assaults on the hospital’s main building housing the emergency operating room and recovery rooms, firing its array of howitzer cannons, 30-millimeter machine canons and other heavy weapons whose standard ammunition includes both high-explosive tips and anti-personnel rounds designed to scatter death in a wide pattern.

This is, in other words, not a precision targeting weapon, but a weapons system designed to spread death over a wide swath.

It explains why the building itself was not leveled, as happens when, for example, a drone first Hellfire missiles at a building or a plane drops a bomb. Rather, the hospital was deliberately set ablaze by incendiary weapons, and the people inside not incinerated were killed by a spray of bullets and anti-personnel flechettes.

Horrific enough to attack a hospital, but to attack it with a weapons system designed to slaughter as many people as possible is almost beyond comprehension.

The hospital in Kunduz was a well-known and long-established institution with a distinctive shape operating in a city that until recently was under full government control. That the US/NATO command did not clearly know the function of that structure is inconceivable, despite US government efforts to claim that a specific provision of the hospital’s coordinates to US forces by Medicine Sans Frontieres days before the attack “must have” gotten waylaid somewhere along the way. (see aerial photo of the hospital in Kunduz).



Here's what a military website says about the plane sent to wreak this havoc:

"Boasting a lethal number of mini-guns, cannons and howitzers, the AC-130 Gunship has earned a reputation as one of the deadliest combat weapons on the planet."

The website Strategypage.com offers the added information that the AC-130's 30-millimeter cannons fire "explosive anti-personnel rounds" as well as explosive ammunition.

If, as claimed by Pentagon officials and the top general in Afghanistan, Army Gen. John Campbell, there were Taliban fighters firing from some location in or near the hospital (a claim vigorously disputed by Medicine Sans Frontieres, which says there was no fighting going on near the hospital and that all people entering the hospital, Taliban victims included, had to surrender weapons at the door as a matter of policy) it still would not justify under any circumstances the use of a weapons system like the AC-130 with its array of industrial slaughter weaponry.

The US has a lot to answer for, which explains why the White House has refused Medicine Sans Frontieres' demand for an independent investigation into this atrocity.

No independent investigation could possibly end up exonerating the US in this case.

As I wrote earlier, the US response to calls for an independent investigation stand in stark contrast to US complaints about Russia's refusal to participate or cooperate with a so-called international investigation into the downing of Malaysian Flight MH-17 over Ukraine two years ago.

One thing is clear: Gen. Campbell's assurance after this atrocity that in continuing operations in and around the embattled city of Kunduz "As always, we will take all reasonable steps to protect civilians from harm," is utter bullshit.

As for his claim that his "thoughts and prayers are with those affected," If he really is praying, I suspect his prayers are really pleas to his god to protect him from being tried someday for mass murder.

If the US can send an AC-130 to provide "air-support" in the middle of a heavily populated urban battle zone, and can use it to assault, for over an hour, a known hospital facility, nobody is safe from American military power.

This is a case that must not go away, that cannot be "paid off" by "condolence" money, and that should lead to some high-profile trials for war crimes.

The Kunduz murders must, as MSF is demanding, be investigated by a genuinely independent international body, not by the killers themselves in the US military or the US government.

