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## Atrocities in Afghanistan: A Troubling Timetable

Posted By [Kathy Kelly and Dan Pearson](#)

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Peace activists can hasten an end to the U.S. war in Afghanistan by demanding a timetable for U.S. military withdrawal. [A bill in the U.S. Congress](#) introduced by Representatives McGovern and Jones, requires such a timetable. In the Senate, a similar bill has been introduced by Senator Feingold. Arguments in favor of a timetable for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan should include readiness to examine disturbing patterns of misinformation regarding U.S./NATO attacks against Afghan civilians.

It is worth noting that even General McChrystal acknowledges that U.S. forces have killed civilians who meant them no harm. During a biweekly videoconference with US soldiers in Afghanistan, he was quite candid. "We've shot an amazing number of people and killed a number and, to my knowledge, none has proven to have been a real threat to the force," said General McChrystal. "To my knowledge, in the nine-plus months I've been here, not a single case where we have engaged in an escalation of force incident and hurt someone has it turned out that the vehicle had a suicide bomb or weapons in it and, in many cases, had families in it."

Those families and individuals that General McChrystal refers to should be our primary concern. We should try to imagine the sorrow and horror afflicting each individual whose tragic story is told in the "timetable" of atrocities committed against innocent people. How can we compensate people who have endured three decades of warfare, whose land has been so ravaged that, according to noted researcher Alfred McCoy, it would cost \$34 billion dollars to restore their agricultural infrastructure. We should notify our elected representatives that the \$33 billion dollar supplemental funding bill sought by the Obama administration to pay for U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq could be directed toward helping Afghanistan replant its orchards,

replenish its flocks, and rebuild its irrigation systems. We should insist on an end to atrocities like those which follow.

The list below describes, in part, the suffering and agony that people in Afghanistan have endured since April, 2009. To focus on this list doesn't excuse atrocities committed by Taliban fighters. It does indicate our own responsibility to urgently educate others and ourselves about a deeply disturbing pattern: U.S./NATO officials first distribute misleading information about victims of an attack and later acknowledge that the victims were unarmed civilians.

**Date:** April 9, 2009

**Place:** Khost Province, Ali Daya

**Circumstances:** U.S. forces were positioned on the rooftop opposite the home of Brigadier Artillery officer Awal Khan. In a night raid, U.S. forces burst into Awal Khan's home. Awal Khan was away from home. His family members ran to the rooftop, believing that robbers had entered the home. When they emerged on their rooftop, U.S. forces on the opposite roof opened fire, killing Awal Khan's wife, his brother, his 17 year-old daughter Nadia, and his fifteen year-old son, Aimal and his infant son, born just a week earlier.

**U.S. /NATO initial response:** April 9, 2010, coalition forces issue a statement that the four people killed by troops were "armed militants." Later that same day [another statement](#) admits that further inquiries "suggest that the people killed and wounded were not enemy combatants as previously reported."

**U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the people killed were unarmed civilians:** *The Times of London* reported the following, on April 11, 2009:

*The US military conceded that its forces killed the civilians in error during the night-time raid that targeted the neighboring compound of a suspected militant. The father of the dead family is a lieutenant-colonel in the Afghan Army fighting the Taliban in the restive province of Ghazni.*

*The US military reported that two males, two females and an infant were believed to have died in the incident, and two other women were wounded. A relative of the dead family told reporters that the dead infant was a boy born last week. "This was a terrible tragedy," a US spokesman, Colonel Greg Julian, told *The Times*.*

**Date:** December 26, 2009

**Place:** Kunar Province

**Circumstances:** In a night raid, U.S. forces, claiming to attack a bomb-making factory, attacked a house where eight youths, aged 11–18, were sleeping. They pulled the youngsters out of their beds, handcuffed them, and executed them. Villagers said that seven of those killed were students and one was a neighboring shepherd.

**U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the people killed were unarmed civilians:** February 24, 2010 — U.S. forces issued an apology, admitting that the U.S. had killed seven schoolboys and a neighboring shepherd.

**Date:** February 2010

**Place:** Helmand Province

During this month, U.S./NATO forces launched a military offensive against three hamlets in the Marja district. Researcher Prof. Marc Herold presents [a detailed summary and analysis](#) of Afghan civilians killed directly by U.S./NATO forces during this particular month.

**Date:** February 12, 2010

**Place:** Paktika Province

**Circumstances:** In a night raid, U.S. forces attacked a home where 25 people, 3 of them musicians, had gathered for a naming celebration. A newborn was being named that night. One of the musicians went outside to relieve himself. A flashlight shone in his face. Panicked, he ran inside and announced that the Taliban were outside. A police commander, Dawoud, the father of the newborn, ran outside with his weapon. U.S. forces opened fire, killing Officer Dawoud, a pregnant mother, an eighteen year old, Gulaila, and two others.

**U.S. / NATO initial response:** February 12, 2010 — U.S. forces claimed that the women had been killed earlier, in an honor killing. NATO's initial press release bore the headline: "Joint Force Operating in Gardez Makes Gruesome Discovery." The release said that after "intelligence confirmed militant activity" in a compound near a village in Paktika province, an international security force entered the compound and engaged "several insurgents" in a firefight. Two "insurgents" were killed, the report said, and after the joint forces entered the compound, they "found the bodies of three women who had been tied up, gagged and killed."

March 16, 2010 — The UN issued a scathing report, stating that the U.S. had killed the women. Villagers told Jerome Starkey, reporting for the *Independent*, that U.S. troops tried to tamper with evidence by digging bullets out of the women's bodies and out of the walls.

**U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the people killed were unarmed civilians:**

April 6, 2010 — Almost two months later, the Pentagon was finally forced to admit that international forces had [badly bungled the raid that night in Paktika](#), and that U.S. troops had, in fact, killed the women during their assault on the residence. One of the women was a pregnant mother of ten, and the other was a pregnant mother of six children.

**Date:** February 21, 2010

**Place:** Convoy en route to Kandahar

**Circumstances:** U.S. aerial forces [attacked a three-car convoy traveling to a market in Kandahar](#). The convoy had planned on continuing to Kabul so that some of the passengers could get medical treatment. At least three dozen people were passengers in the three cars. The front car was an SUV type vehicle, and the last was a Land Cruiser. When the first car was hit by U.S. air fire, women in the second car jumped out and waved their scarves to indicate that they were civilians. U.S. helicopters continued to fire rockets and machine guns, killing 21 people and wounding 13.

**U.S./NATO initial response:** February 22, 2010 — The day after the attack, the U.S.-led military coalition said that NATO forces had fired on a group of "suspected insurgents" who were thought to be on their way to attack Afghan and coalition soldiers a few miles away. When troops arrived after the helicopter strike, they discovered women and children among the dead and wounded.

**U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the people killed were unarmed civilians:**

Feb 24, 2010 — General Stanley McChrystal delivered a videotaped apology.

**Date:** April 12, 2010

**Place:** Kandahar

**Circumstances:** According to the *New York Times*, "American troops raked a large passenger bus with gunfire near Kandahar on Monday morning, (April 12)." [The attack killed five civilians and wounded 18](#).

**Initial U.S./NATO response:** [A statement](#) issued by the American-led military command in Kabul said that four people were killed. It said "an unknown, large vehicle" drove "at a high rate of speed" toward a slow-moving NATO convoy that was clearing mines.

**U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the people killed were unarmed civilians:** [April 12, 2010](#) — "ISAF deeply regrets the tragic loss of life in Zhari district this morning. According to ISAF operational reporting, four civilians were killed, including one female, and five others were treated for injuries at the scene of the incident today. Upon inspection, NATO forces discovered the vehicle to be a passenger bus."

April 13, 2010 — The *New York Times* [reported](#) that "a military spokeswoman confirmed that a convoy traveling west, in front of the bus, opened fire, but said the second convoy was traveling east toward the passenger bus. She also said the driver of the bus was killed. A survivor, however, identified himself as the driver and said he did not violate any signal from the troops. 'I was going to take the bus off the road,' said the man, Mohammed Nabi. 'Then the convoy ahead opened fire from 60 to 70 yards away,' he said."

**Date:** April 20, 2010

**Place:** Khost Province

**Circumstances:** A NATO military convoy attacked a car approaching a checkpoint, claiming that the car sped up after being warned to stop. Four young men were killed. [According to the New York Times](#), "The shooting Monday night in Khost province sparked an immediate outcry from the victims' family, who insisted that all four were civilians driving home from a volleyball game. 'The youngest boy was just 13,' said Rahmatullah Mansour, whose two sons and two nephews were killed in the shooting. Mansour said that the victims in Monday's shooting were his sons Faizullah, 13, and Nasratullah, 17; and nephews Maiwand and Amirullah, both 18. He said all were students except Amirullah, who was a police officer."

**Initial U.S. / NATO response:** April 21, 2010 — [From the New York Times](#): "Without offering proof, NATO described the dead as two insurgents and their "associates." In a statement on Tuesday, NATO said the vehicle ignored warning shots and accelerated toward the military convoy. But the statement did not challenge the Afghan account that no weapons were found in the vehicle."

**U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the people killed were unarmed civilians:**

[April 22, 2010](#) — NATO acknowledged Wednesday that four unarmed Afghans who were killed this week when a military convoy opened fire on their vehicle were all civilians, correcting an earlier claim that two of the dead were "known insurgents."

**Date:** April 28, 2010

**Place:** Surkh Rod district, near Jalalabad

**Circumstances:** [According to Safiya Sidiqi](#), a member of the Afghan parliament, dozens of Afghan and U.S. soldiers entered her family home, blindfolded and handcuffed men and women, and killed her brother-in-law, Amanullah, a 30 year old car mechanic with five children. "They shot him six times. In his heart, in his face, in his head," Sidiqi said on Thursday, April 29th. Both legs were broken.

**Initial U.S./NATO response:** [April 29, 2010](#) — An Afghan-international security force killed one armed individual while pursuing a Taliban facilitator in Nangarhar last night.