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European Languages

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The Guardian

How British forces fired on Afghan civilians

10/30/2010

Leaks of classified war documents by the whistleblowing website WikiLeaks accuse British troops of carrying out attacks on Afghan civilians. The Ministry of Defence today disclosed its version of the incidents after a freedom of information request by the Guardian. Although an incomplete picture, the details provide a rare and compelling account of British errors in the field.

15 November 2006

A patrol from J Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines, used hand signals to warn a white Hilux vehicle to stop. When the vehicle failed to respond, warning shots were fired. The shots resulted in the death of two local nationals and the injury of two others (one female and one child). All of the casualties were evacuated to Camp Bastion.

[US army report on incident](#)

4 October 2007

A UK patrol on Route Bottle in Kabul fired a warning shot and injured a civilian local national. The casualty was wounded from two to three bullets. The UK Quick Reaction Force was sent to bring the casualty to the hospital at Camp Warehouse where he was operated on.

[US army report on incident](#)

21 October 2007

At 0515 (Afghan local time) soldiers from 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards were involved in three incidents whilst patrolling in Kabul. The initial incident occurred when a white Toyota vehicle pulled out in front of the patrol and failed to stop in response to warning signals. A single shot was fired at the vehicle, which then stopped. A few minutes after this incident a silver minibus failed to stop when signalled to do so.

One of the soldiers fired a small number of rounds in front of the vehicle which then drove forward towards the patrol in a manner which is recognised as consistent with suicide bomber tactics. Following the failure of the vehicle to stop again shots were fired at it.

Whilst the patrol was trying to assess the situation a third vehicle failed to stop at warning signals given by the patrol which resulted in warning shots being fired.

When the situation allowed, the patrol returned to where the silver minibus had been in order to follow up and to provide assistance to any casualties. However, the vehicle and passengers had left the scene. A witness told the patrol that there had been two casualties. Follow-up inquiries made with the Kabul chief of police by the UK confirmed that three individuals had been injured and driven to a hospital by the remaining passenger who was uninjured. Of the three casualties, one subsequently died, one was very seriously injured and one had a minor injury.

[US army report on incident](#)

The US army reported that on that day, a "civilian vehicle with three interpreters and a driver were fired upon in downtown Kabul by a [military](#)-type vehicle that was brown with a gunner on top. Three of the occupants were wounded, two critically and one non-critically." "Investigation is controlled by the British. We [are] not able to get the complete story".

25 October 2007

A joint UK/US patrol was being undertaken along Route Bottle in Kabul when a vehicle approached at speed. After verbal and physical escalation of force drills had been undertaken and failed, warning shots were fired. When the patrol approached the vehicle, it was discovered that one of the vehicle occupants had suffered a gunshot wound to the shoulder. The casualty was given immediate first aid and evacuated to Camp Phoenix, then onwards to the hospital at Camp Warehouse.

[US army report on incident](#)

6 November 2007

At 11.15 (Afghan local time), a foot patrol from 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards were patrolling along Route Purple in Kabul. A silver Toyota car which was close to the rear of the patrol pulled out and accelerated towards it. Due to the speed of the vehicle approaching there was not time to carry out any other warning measures than shouting before shots had to be fired. The shots caused the vehicle to skid to a stop at the side of the road where the driver opened the door and fell from the vehicle. A female passenger remained in the car. The patrol provided immediate first aid to the driver who had been injured from a gunshot wound to his abdomen.

A UK ambulance took the casualty to the ISAF hospital at Kabul International Airport and relatives of the driver were taken to the hospital by the Kabul police. The driver unfortunately died following a three-hour operation. The driver was confirmed as the son of an Afghan general.

[US army report on incident](#)

The US army reported: "There could be some demonstration, the civilian is a son of an Afghan general ... The wedding for this evening was planned for his brother but now it is cancelled."

12 March 2008

Personnel from B Company, 4th Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland were conducting Operation Mar Jaang when an unknown number of insurgents engaged them with small-arms fire and rocket propelled grenades from multiple points. The UK personnel engaged the insurgents and also requested support from attack helicopters. The attack helicopters identified further insurgents in the area and engaged them in order to protect the UK personnel on the ground. A medical evacuation request was submitted for one casualty who was assessed to be a member of the Afghan national police.

[US army report on incident](#)

14 October 2008

Marines from Yankee Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines, were conducting a routine vehicle checkpoint. Whilst conducting it, a local national approached them on a motorbike but stopped a distance away from the checkpoint following verbal warnings. After the initial response, the local national continued towards the checkpoint and was warned again to stop. As he was getting closer, warning shots were fired, one of which ricocheted off the ground in front of the rider and hit him, causing him to fall from the bike. The rider was taken to a nearby patrol base where he was treated by the duty medic for gunshot wounds to his right thigh and left foot. He was then transported to a forward operating base where he was assessed by the medical officer and sent on to the Afghan Bost hospital in Lashkar Gah.

[US army report on incident](#)

22 October 2008

A joint UK/Afghan patrol in Sangin was waiting to assist members of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team when they observed an individual travelling on a motorbike towards their position. Recent reports had suggested a threat of suicide bombers. When the motorbike was approaching, warning shots were fired into the ground in front of it but it did not stop or change direction. Further warning shots were fired as the motorbike continued to approach which caused it to fall into a ditch and catch fire. After a short period to ensure it was safe to approach the motorbike, the patrol went to examine it but unfortunately the individual was confirmed as dead.

[US army report on incident](#)

The US army reported that "on inspection, the local national was immediately confirmed as dead and not a suicide bomber".

19 November 2008

At 17.10 (Afghan local time), a convoy from J Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines, was returning to a patrol base in Babaji when a white Toyota Corolla drove towards it. There had been report of a suicide bomber in the area. In light of this reporting, a warning shot was fired at the vehicle but it continued to drive towards the patrol. More warning shots were fired which caused the vehicle to swerve and stop. A member of the convoy approached the vehicle to check the condition of the occupants, who were an adult male and two adult females, none of which appeared to be injured.

After further investigation it was confirmed that a child had also been present in the car who was killed by one of the rounds fired at the vehicle.

[US army report on incident](#)

28 November 2008

A police mentoring team, from the Royal Gurkha Rifles, were undertaking a patrol in the Lashkar Gah area when they saw a white Toyota saloon car speeding towards them. Warnings were given to the vehicle using standard escalation-of-force tactics including warning shots fired into the air. The vehicle did still not stop so warning shots were fired at the vehicle as it passed close by the patrol. When the vehicle stopped three occupants were ordered out, two of whom were wearing Afghan national police uniforms. It was later established that all three were serving members of the Afghan national police.

One of the occupants had been injured by the warning shots and was provided with immediate first aid. He was evacuated to Lashkar Gah main operating base, where he was treated at the medical facility. Unfortunately he was declared dead whilst at this facility. His body was released to members of the Afghan national police.

Whilst the casualty was being evacuated, an Afghan national police officer approached the patrol and stated that a local national child had been hit in the leg by a bullet and taken to Lashkar Gah hospital.

[US army report on incident](#)

4 December 2008

At 16.05 (Afghan local time), members of W Company, 45 Commando Royal Marines who were on patrol spotted an individual who appeared to be tracking them. A motorbike also approached them before moving off at speed. A warning shot was fired at the individual tracking the patrol which caused him to move away briefly before returning. Due to reports of an imminent threat another warning shot was fired but it was unclear whether the individual had been hit.

At 18.05 (Afghan local time) an individual was brought to the Royal Marines with gunshot wounds who explained his movements had been due to trying to locate his family as they had moved compounds.

[US army report on incident](#)

24 December 2008

Members of L Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines were participating in Operation Sond Chara. At around 09.45 (Afghan local time) a vehicle appeared from behind a compound travelling at speed. The patrol let it pass but then it suddenly changed direction and began heading directly back towards them. Due to its proximity there was not time to employ lesser warning tactics so warning shots were fired. The vehicle still did not stop or change direction so further warning shots were fired at the vehicle. The rounds hit the driver in the shoulder. He was moved to the HQ of the patrol where first aid was provided. He was then evacuated to the hospital at Camp Bastion where he received immediate surgery.

[US army report on incident](#)

30 December 2008

Members of W Company, 45 Commando Royal Marines were conducting a patrol to help build up their intelligence picture of the local area. During the patrol a white van speeded towards them and failed to stop after verbal warnings were given. As the vehicle didn't stop, a warning shot was fired which ricocheted from the engine block and hit the passenger. The van stopped and the driver was told by an interpreter to take the casualty to the nearby forward operating base for medical attention. The casualty was a 12-year-old boy who was treated by the medical officer at the base and then evacuated to the hospital at Camp Bastion.

[US army report on incident](#)

3 January 2009

A joint UK/Afghan patrol, which included personnel from 1 Rifles, was being observed by someone they assessed as a threat. A warning shot was fired but accidentally hit a local national child who had not been observed originally. The Quick Reaction Force was deployed from the local forward operating base to evacuate the injured child back to the hospital at Camp Bastion.

[US army report on incident](#)

19 January 2009

During the morning, members of Y Company, 45 Commando Royal Marines were conducting searches in Sangin. They were supported by air assets who were providing overwatch. The air assets identified two separate groups of insurgents with weapons who provided a threat to the marines. Each group was engaged with a missile.

Later that day at 13.30 (local time) two local national children were brought to the forward operating base by their father. They had both been injured in their abdomens by shrapnel. They were treated by the medical officer and then evacuated to the hospital at Camp Bastion.

[US army report on incident](#)

The US army reported that the missiles were fired by Reaper drones.

27 January 2009

At 17.45 (Afghan local time), members of W Company, 45 Commando Royal Marines, were conducting a patrol in Sangin. The patrol were being observed by two adult males who they believed were reporting their progress in order to prepare for an IED attack. Warning shots were fired at the individuals. The patrol continued but later observed a casualty being moved by local nationals in the district centre. A child was also taken to the district centre suffering from a gunshot wound. Both casualties were treated at the forward operating base medical facility and the adult male was evacuated to the hospital at Camp Bastion.

[US army report on incident](#)

26 March 2009

Members of W Company, 45 Commando Royal Marines were conducting a patrol in Sangin. The patrol had received report of a threat from improvised explosive devices and they observed suspicious movement near them. Warning shots were fired. Following this a motorcycle approached the patrol driving slowly and observing them. Warning shots were fired and the bike disappeared.

However, the bike rapidly came back and was assessed as presenting an imminent threat so was engaged with one round of gunfire.

The adult male fell to the ground and was immediately given first aid for a single gunshot wound. He was treated by the medical officer at the forward operating base and then evacuated to the hospital at Camp Bastion.

On further questioning the casualty, he was found to be in the possession of prescribed medication assessed to be anti-psychotic drugs.

[US army report on incident](#)

19 May 2009

At about 09.55 (Afghan local time), a police mentoring team foot patrol from 1 Royal Gurkha Rifles was engaged with enemy fire from multiple positions. Due to the nature of the fire received from enemy forces the patrol requested air cover to help them extract themselves from the area. A fast jet arrived and after observing the area to ensure the target had been correctly identified, engaged the enemy forces with a laser-guided bomb. Approximately 60 minutes after the patrol had returned to their patrol base, a local national arrived indicating that the bomb had been dropped on a compound which had killed some of his family.

[US army report on incident](#)

The US army reported that eight Afghan civilians "had been killed, a compound destroyed and two jerabs of wheat were burned. Compensation for relatives and the landowner has commenced".

28 May 2009

A foot patrol from A Company, 4th Battalion, the Rifles was returning to Forward Operating Base Jackson after conducting a resupply operation to Patrol Base Airport Lounge when it observed a white saloon vehicle being driven at speed towards them. Both verbal and visual warnings were given, to which the driver responded by stopping the vehicle. Whilst the patrol were conducting a search of the vehicle, a second white saloon vehicle which had been parked further up the road started to accelerate towards them.

The search was being conducted in the dark but the second vehicle had its headlights on. Visual and verbal warnings were given but the second vehicle failed to respond so a member of the patrol fired shots at it. The vehicle then stopped and the driver was ordered out. Once he exited the vehicle it was discovered that he was injured and had sustained a gun shot wound to his upper left arm. Immediate medical treatment was provided at the scene and also at Forward Operating Base Jackson.

[US army report on incident](#)

The US army reported that the driver of the second vehicle said "they had not been [able] to see the patrol in the dark, even though the car had two headlights in good working order".

30 September 2009

At approximately 13.50 hours (Afghan local time), a patrol from 4th Battalion, the Rifles was conducting pre-planned operations near Nad-e-Ali when they were engaged by enemy fire from a number of firing points. Support from attack helicopters was called in but on arrival no movement on the ground was seen. However, once the air support had left enemy fire started again. To extract themselves from the engagement, the patrol called in support from fast jets. A target compound was identified as where some of the enemy fire was coming from, and a bomb was dropped by the fast air support.

Initial reporting indicated that a number of insurgents had been killed in the strike. However, shortly after the patrol returned to their base, a number of local national casualties arrived. One of the injured civilians was evacuated by helicopter to the hospital at Camp Bastion for further medical treatment.

[US army report on incident](#)

The US army reported that seven civilians were confirmed as having been killed and another wounded. "Discussion with the crowd found that local national reported that there were two families in the compound. The local nationals are saying seven dead, possibly six of them children, and one wounded female."

10 November 2009

At approximately 16.28 (Afghan local time), members of Number 1 Company, Coldstream Guards were conducting a patrol when a single vehicle appeared at speed from around a corner and accelerated towards them. Hand signals were used to try to get the vehicle to stop, which were ignored. Therefore, a warning shot was fired but the vehicle continued its course towards the patrol, causing one of them to dive to take cover. Two other soldiers fired at the vehicle, which finally caused it to stop. When members of the patrol went to investigate they discovered that a young girl has sustained a gunshot wound to her chest. Immediate first aid was administered at the scene and she was then evacuated to a nearby patrol base.

A US helicopter-borne medical team was called but sadly on arrival declared the young girl as dead.