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AFP

NATO admits killing three Afghan civilians

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NATO's [International Security Assistance Force](#) on Saturday admitted that its troops killed three civilians and wounded four others during fighting with militants in eastern Afghanistan.

The alliance said the civilians were "accidentally killed" when its troops came under fire in the village of Tantil in the Darah-ye Pech district of Kunar province on Friday.

"[Coalition](#) forces identified the insurgent position and returned fire with mortar rounds," the military said in a statement.

"Three or four rounds landed short of the target area, near a village. As a result, three Afghan civilians were accidentally killed and four wounded."

US Army Colonel Rafael Torres added: "We take civilian casualties seriously and we do everything within our power to prevent civilian casualties in the course of operations -- in this case, we failed."

"Our thoughts and concerns are with the families of this tragic accident," said Torres, who is director of the ISAF Joint Command Combined Joint Operations Centre.

[ISAF](#) told AFP in an email on Thursday that the numbers of civilian deaths and injuries caused by its troops were down 8.33 percent in nearly two years, with 306 killed and wounded in 2009 and 255 deaths and injuries so far in 2010.

But although injuries were down (255 to 306), deaths were up (174 to 162) during the period.

In comparison, ISAF said insurgents were responsible for 2,153 deaths and injuries in 2009 and 2,198 so far this year, an overall rise of 3.86 percent.

The [United Nations](#) says that 2010 is the deadliest in the nine-year war for ordinary Afghans, with 1,271 killed in the first six months, an increase of a third. Most are caused by insurgent attacks, it added.