

U.S. airstrike kills 14 members of one family in Afghanistan



Kabul, March 26 (RHC)-- The United States has carried out airstrikes in Afghanistan's northern Kunduz province after a fatal insider attack, leaving at least 14 civilians dead, mostly women and children.

According to the New York Times, the latest episode began after an armored vehicle used by U.S. troops broke down as they were heading to a security checkpoint. When the soldiers got out to fix the vehicle, an Afghan soldier described by officials as a Taliban insider opened fire on them.

The U.S. forces reportedly fired back at the assailant, "and Afghan soldiers stationed in a nearby outpost returned fire at them, not realizing what had happened," the newspaper quoted a local commander as saying. U.S. military officials said the Americans called in air raids, which killed 12 civilians and six soldiers.

Nangayalay, a local police commander in the area, said 14 members of a large refugee family were killed in one of the aerial attacks that hit their house. The U.S. bombs also hit the Afghan outpost, leaving between four and eight soldiers dead, according to varying estimates. Local officials said at least eight children and four women were among those who lost their lives in the airstrikes.

Civilian casualties from aerial attacks conducted by US forces have surged across Afghanistan over the past few months. The United States has recently stepped up its air raids in an attempt to exert pressure

on the Taliban to accept a negotiated end to its 18-year insurgency.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan recorded 649 civilians casualties as a result of aerial attacks in the first nine months of last year, the highest number in any year since systematic recording began in 2009.

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