

Britain 'laments' files leak

The government 'laments' the leak of documents allegedly revealing cases of Afghan civilians killed by UK troops...

The records include references to at least 21 incidents involving UK troops. The Ministry of Defence said it had been unable to verify the claims...

A Downing Street spokeswoman said the UK government 'lamented the release of classified material'...

Asked what the consequences were for UK forces in Afghanistan, Foreign Secretary William Hague said: 'They don't mean anything for British troops'...

Incidents said to have involved British troops included the son of an Afghan general being killed by a 'warning shot'...

The bodies of two women and two children were said to have been found after ambushed troops called in helicopter gunships...

Karzai ordered the National Security Council to investigate the incident, Sediq Sediqqi, head of media relations at the presidency, said earlier.

The dead included women and children, he said. Reports surfaced on Saturday that a helicopter gunship fired on villagers who had been told by insurgents to leave their homes...

According to witness accounts, men, women and children fled to Regey village and were fired on from helicopter gunships as they took cover.

Abdul Ghafar, 45, told AFP that he lost 'two daughters and one son and two sisters' in the attack.

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The Indian part of the infrastructure will also include a 400 KV switching station at Baharampur, loop-in and loop-out of Farakka-Jeerat 400 KV single circuit line at the same place, and a 400 KV double circuit line from Baharampur of India running up to Bheramara in Bangladesh.

BPDB will pay the transmission tariff on a monthly basis. During the tenure of the agreement, if the line is used by any other beneficiary in either country, the transmission charges will be proportionally shared by the beneficiary.

Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) floated a tender in April to set up a 40 km transmission line in Bheramara with a high voltage sub-station at a cost of 150 million US dollars, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

ADB has been reviewing the tender evaluation results for the last two months. Once that is over, PGCB will award the contract to the lowest responsive bidder, so the job can be completed within two years.

Power Secretary AK Azad yesterday said the contract for constructing the transmission line will be awarded within a month.

WIKILEAKS DISCLOSURE

'Pakistan helping Taliban'

REUTERS/AP

Pakistan was actively collaborating with the Taliban in Afghanistan while accepting US aid, new US military reports showed, a disclosure likely to increase the pressure on Washington's embattled ally.

Documents leaked by Wikileaks said representatives from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence met directly with the Taliban in secret strategy sessions to organise militant networks fighting US soldiers.

The White House condemned the leak, saying it could threaten national security and endanger the lives of Americans. Pakistan said leaking unprocessed reports from the battlefield was irresponsible.

US national security adviser Jim Jones said the leak would not affect 'our ongoing commitment to deepen our partnerships with Afghanistan and Pakistan.'

The revelations were contained in more than 90,000 classified documents which US officials focussed on the period leading to the launch of President Barack Obama's Afghan strategy last December, when he authorised deployment of 30,000 additional troops.

Violence in Afghanistan is at its highest of the 9-year-old war as the thousands of extra US troops step up their campaign to drive insurgents out of their traditional heartland in the south.

'As we continue our force levels and our operations over the summer ... we will likely see further tough casualties and levels of violence,' Admiral Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, told reporters in Kabul on Sunday.

The United States has repeatedly urged Pakistan to hunt down militant groups, including some believed to have been nurtured by the ISI as strategic assets in Afghanistan and against arch rival India. Islamabad says it is doing all it can to fight the militants, adding it was a victim of terrorism itself.

Associated Press reports, WikiLeaks posted the documents Sunday. The New York Times, London's Guardian newspaper and the German weekly Der Spiegel were given early access to the records.

Pakistan's Ambassador Husain Haqqani said the documents 'do not reflect the current on-ground realities,' in which his country and Washington are 'jointly endeavouring to defeat al-Qaeda and its Taliban allies.'

The US and Pakistan assigned teams of analysts to read the records online to assess whether sources or locations were at risk.

The New York Times said the documents reveal that only a short time ago, there was far less harmony in US and Pakistani exchanges.

The Times says the 'raw intelligence assessments' by lower level military officers suggest that Pakistan 'allows representatives of its spy service to meet directly with the Taliban in secret strategy sessions to organize networks of militant groups that fight against American soldiers in Afghanistan, and even hatch plots to assassinate Afghan leaders.'

The Guardian, however, interpreted the documents differently, saying they 'fail to provide a convincing smoking gun' for complicity between the Pakistan intelligence services and the Taliban.

The leaked records include detailed descriptions of raids carried out by a secretive US special operations unit called Task Force 373 against what US officials considered high-value insurgent and terrorist targets. Some of the raids resulted in unintended killings of Afghan civilians, according to the documentation.

During the targeting and killing of Libyan fighter Abu Laith al-Libi, described in the documents as a senior al-Qaeda military commander, the death tally was reported as six enemy fighters and seven non-combatants -- all children.

Task Force 373 selected its targets from 2,000 senior Taliban and al-Qaeda figures posted on a 'kill or capture' list, known as JPEL, the Joint Prioritized Effects List, the Guardian said.

US government agencies have been bracing for a deluge of thousands more classified documents since the leak of helicopter cockpit video of a 2007 firefight in Baghdad. That was blamed on a US Army intelligence analyst, Bradley Manning, 22, of Potomac.

The founder of a website which published tens of thousands of leaked military files about the war in Afghanistan said yesterday they showed that the 'course of the war needs to change'.

Julian Assange of Wikileaks also used a press conference in London to dismiss the White House's furious reaction to the disclosures.

'We're familiar with groups whose abuse we expose attempting to criticise the messenger,' Assange said. 'We don't see any difference in the White House response to this case.'

When asked whether the leaks would have any bearing on planned international troop withdrawals in the next few years, he said: 'I think it's too early to say yet.'

'It's clear that it will shape understanding of what the past six years of war have been like and that the course of the war needs to change'.

Wikileaks released tens of thousands of documents to three newspapers. The most controversial allegations centre on claims that Pakistan, a key US ally, allows its spies to meet directly with the Taliban.

The leaks were strongly condemned by the White House, which said they could put the lives at risk and threaten national security.

Assange also defended the sourcing and reliability of the documents.



Australian founder of whistleblowing website, Wikileaks, Julian Assange, holds up a copy of current Guardian newspaper during a press conference in London yesterday.

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Rocket attack kills up to 45 civilians in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

A rocket attack on an Afghan village killed up to 45 civilians, a spokesman for President Hamid Karzai told AFP yesterday, as leaked documents laid bare the civilian toll of the US-led war.

Women and children were among the dead. An investigation is underway to determine who was responsible for the strike.

'A rocket was launched. It hit a civilian house where many people sought refuge (and) 40 to 45 people were killed,' Waheed Omar said, referring to a reported attack in the Sangin district of Helmand province on Friday.

Asked if Nato forces carried out the attack, Omar said: 'We will have to wait for the final report.'

Karzai ordered the National Security Council to investigate the incident, Sediq Sediqqi, head of media relations at the presidency, said earlier.

The dead included women and children, he said. Reports surfaced on Saturday that a helicopter gunship fired on villagers who had been told by insurgents to leave their homes as a firefight with troops from Nato's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was imminent.

According to witness accounts, men, women and children fled to Regey village and were fired on from helicopter gunships as they took cover.

Abdul Ghafar, 45, told AFP that he lost 'two daughters and one son and two sisters' in the attack.

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Indian aid ship to join anti-Gaza blockade campaign

IE, India

An Indian vessel is set to join a new international campaign named 'The Audacity of Hope' to press for an end to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, months after nine pro-Palestinian activists were killed in an attack on an aid ship bound for Gaza.

An e-mail circulated by pro-Palestinian activists in the US said an American ship named after US President Barack Obama's autobiography, will join a flotilla of other vessels from Europe, Canada, India, South Africa and the Middle East in an additional attempt to break the Israeli naval blockade in early autumn.

The new campaign comes amid an increased international hue and cry to force the Jewish state to lift its siege of the coastal territory. The effort is supported by several prominent figures, including Prof Rashid Khalidi, a well-known critic of Israel whose friendship with the US president has raised eyebrows here.

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Maoist rebels killed in West Bengal

BBC ONLINE

Police in India's eastern state of West Bengal say they have killed at least six Maoist rebels during a gun battle.

They say fighting began late on Sunday when paramilitaries and police surrounded a rebel base in Goaltore in restive West Midnapore district.

At least two paramilitary personnel were seriously injured in the fighting, police said.

Thousands have died in the rebels' decades-long fight against the state.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has described the insurgency as India's biggest internal security challenge.

'NOT EXPECTING US' The latest clash began on Sunday night after the rebels spotted the security forces, according to West Midnapore police chief Manoj Verma.

'The rebels were clearly not expecting us,' he said. Police said yesterday they had recovered the bodies of six rebels, including a senior local commander.

Advertisement for Handsan Hand Sanitizer. Includes image of a hand with sanitizer and a bottle of sanitizer. Text: 'For All The Things That Your Hands Touch', 'Nothing sanitizes and cleans like Handsan Hand Sanitizer. It kills 99.9% of germs...'