

Pentagon probe claims no misconduct in deadly U.S. drone attack in Kabul



Aimal Ahmadi stands next to the wreckage of a vehicle that was destroyed in the August 29 US drone attack in Kabul that killed his brother, Zemari Ahmadi, and other relatives [File: Hoshang Hashimi /AFP]

Washington, November 4 (RHC)-- A U.S. drone attack that killed 10 civilians, including seven children, in the Afghan capital Kabul in August did not violate the laws of war, an internal Pentagon review has concluded.

Speaking to reporters at the Pentagon on Wednesday, U.S. Air Force Lieutenant General Sami Said said “execution errors”, including “confirmation bias” and “communication breakdowns,” contributed to the deadly attack. But Said, who acts as inspector general of the U.S. Air Force, said it was not a violation of the law of war or a result of negligence. “It was an honest mistake,” Said said. “But it’s not criminal conduct, random conduct, negligence.”

The drone strike on August 29 came amid Washington's chaotic military withdrawal from Kabul, and Said also stressed that it took place as American forces were contending with threats from the Islamic State in Khorasan Province, ISKP (ISIS-K), an affiliate of ISIS (ISIL).

“The intended target of the strike – the vehicle, the white Corolla – its contents were genuinely assessed at the time to be a threat to U.S. forces” based on an “interpretation of intelligence” that turned out to be inaccurate, Said said.

The U.S. military initially claimed the Kabul drone attack had killed ISIS-K fighters who were preparing to attack US troops at the airport.

But relatives of the victims said 10 members of the Ahmadi and Nejrabi families, ranging in age from two to 40 years old, had been killed. “They were innocent, helpless children,” Aimal Ahmadi, whose nieces and nephews were among those killed, told Al Jazeera after the attack.

Aimal’s brother, Zemari Ahmadi, was driving the car that was struck and also killed. Zemari worked for U.S.-based aid agency Nutrition and Education International (NEI).

The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden later acknowledged that civilians were killed and senior officials apologised – something the family members of the victims said was not enough.

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