

U.S. President Forced to Apologize to Kabul, MSF for Airstrike on Kunduz Hospital



Washington, October 8 (RHC)-- U.S. President Barack Obama has apologized to Afghanistan and the Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) organization for a deadly airstrike on a hospital in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest appeared before reporters in Washington, DC, on Wednesday to make the announcement. In a phone call with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Obama expressed "his condolences for the innocent loss of life in that incident," Earnest said.

The White House spokesman said that "Obama spoke by telephone with Doctors Without Borders International President Dr. Joanne Liu, to apologize and express his condolences for the MSF staff and patients who were killed and injured when a U.S. military airstrike mistakenly struck an MSF field hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan over the weekend."

The Saturday hospital attack in Kunduz killed 22 people, three of whom were children and 12 MSF staff members.

Earnest said: "The President assured Dr. Liu that the Department of Defense investigation currently underway would provide a transparent, thorough and objective accounting of the facts and circumstances of the incident. And that if necessary, the President would implement changes that would make tragedies like this one less likely to occur in the future."

The MSF president released a statement in response, calling for "independent investigation" in to the incident the U.S. argues is a "mistake" made "within the U.S. chain of command."

"We received President Obama's apology today for the attack against our trauma hospital in Afghanistan," Liu said in a statement. "However, we reiterate our ask that the U.S. government consent to an independent investigation led by the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission [or IHFFC] to establish what happened in Kunduz, how it happened, and why it happened."

At a news briefing, Liu also warned that "If we let this go, as if was a non-event, we are basically giving a blank check to any countries who are at war... If we don't safeguard that medical space for us to do our activities, then it is impossible to work in other contexts like Syria, South Sudan, like Yemen."

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