

U.S. Army General Claims 'Human Error' Cause of Kunduz Hospital Attack



Kabul, November 26 (RHC)-- The United States says the deadly airstrike that recently destroyed an Afghan hospital in the northern city of Kunduz was the result of a "human error, compounded by process and equipment failures."

General John Francis Campbell, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, made the remarks at a press conference in the capital Kabul on Wednesday, further admitting that the U.S. forces took 17 minutes to act after being warned by Médecins Sans Frontières, or Doctors Without Borders, which was running the hospital in the country.

Campbell described the October 3rd air raid on the hospital, packed with patients and medical staff, a "tragic and avoidable accident, caused by human error."

"At 2:20 a.m. an SOF [special operations forces] officer at Bagram [airbase] received a call from MSF advising that their facility was under attack. It took the headquarters and the US special operations commander until 2:37 a.m. to realize the fatal mistake. At that time the AC-130 had already ceased firing. The strike lasted for approximately 29 minutes. This is an example of human process error."

The general was announcing the results of an internal investigation into the incident, which left at least 30 dead. U.S. forces "did not know the compound was an MSF medical centre," said Campbell. "They executed from air and did not take appropriate measures to verify the facility was a military target," he said, adding that "fatigue" and "high operational tempo contributed to this tragedy."

MSF General Director Christopher Stokes responded to Campbell's remarks that were accompanied by a 3,000-page U.S. military report. "The U.S. version of events presented today leaves MSF with more questions than answers. It is shocking that an attack can be carried out when U.S. forces have neither eyes on a target nor access to a no-strike list, and have malfunctioning communications systems," Stokes said, adding: "It appears that 30 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of people are denied life-saving care in Kunduz simply because the MSF hospital was the closest large building to an open field and "roughly matched" a description of an intended target."

The MSF official accused the U.S. forces of violation of the rules of war, further reiterating calls for an independent probe into the incident.

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