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## NATION&amp;WORLD

# Afghan allies urged U.S. military to strike hospital, evidence shows

WASHINGTON (AP) — Immediately after the U.S. killed at least 30 people in a devastating airstrike on a charity hospital, Afghanistan's national security adviser told a European diplomat his country would take responsibility because "we are without doubt, 100 percent convinced the place was occupied by Taliban," according to notes of the meeting reviewed by The Associated Press.

More than a month later, no evidence has emerged to support that assertion. Eyewitnesses told the AP they saw no gunmen at the hospital.

Instead, there are mounting indications the U.S. military relied heavily on Afghan allies who resented the internationally run Doctors Without Borders hospital, which treated Afghan security forces and Taliban alike but says it refused to admit armed men.

The new evidence includes details the AP has learned about the location of American troops during the attack. The U.S. special forces unit whose commander called in the strike was under fire in the Kunduz provincial governor's compound a half-mile away from the hospital, according to a former intelligence official who has reviewed documents describing the incident. The commander could not see the medical facility — so couldn't know firsthand whether the Taliban were using it as a base — and sought the attack on the recommendation of Afghan forces, the official said.

Members of the unit have told Rep. Duncan Hunter, a California Republican who serves on the House Armed Services Committee, that they were unaware their target was a functioning hospital until the attack was over, said Joe Kasper, Hunter's spokesman.

Looking ahead, the strike raises questions about whether the U.S. military can rely on intelligence from Afghan allies in a war in which small contingents of Americans will increasingly fight with larger units of local forces.

Also at issue is how the target was vetted. American commanders, with sophisticated information technology at their disposal, allowed the strike to go forward



Associated Press file photo

The charred interior of the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, is seen Oct. 16 after being hit by a U.S. airstrike. Afghan authorities apparently were convinced the hospital was occupied by Taliban.

despite reports in their databases that the hospital was functioning. Even if armed Taliban fighters had been hiding inside, the U.S. acknowledges it would not have been justified in destroying a working hospital filled with wounded patients.

Jailani, a 31-year-old mechanic who uses only one name, says he was at the hospital to see his brother-in-law, Ibrahim, who was admitted two days before the airstrike.

"On the day of the attack I was in the hospital from 9 a.m. until 5 a.m. During that time, the Taliban came in without guns, as patients or accompanying their patients, or sometimes they came to take their dead out," he said. "They did not have permission to enter the hospital with their guns."

President Barack Obama has apologized for the attack. The Pentagon has said it was a mistake that resulted from both human and technical errors, and it is investigating, along with NATO and the Afghan government.

"No other nation in the history of warfare has gone to the lengths we do to avoid civilian casualties," Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis said in a statement. "And when we make a mistake, we will not only own up to it, we will also scrutinize all of the facts to learn from them so that it never happens again."

The attack by an AC-130 gunship came after days of heavy fighting in the northern Afghanistan city. About 35 members of the 3rd Special Forces Group had been helping about 100 Afghan special forces soldiers retake Kunduz from the Taliban, the former U.S. intelligence official said. From their position in the governor's compound, they came under heavy assault by Taliban fighters, and sought to use air power to destroy the Taliban's remaining command and control nodes around the city.

The Afghans insisted the hospital was one of those command centers, and urged that it be destroyed, the former official said.

## Jet in crash gave no call of distress

AKRON, Ohio (AP) — Seven associates of a Florida real estate investment company were on the second day of a multicity Midwestern trip to look at property for potential shopping centers when their small jet crashed into an Ohio apartment house, killing all nine people onboard.

The crash Tuesday afternoon in Akron — 2 miles from the small airport where the plane was to land — killed two executives and five employees at Pebb Enterprises, a Boca Raton-based company that specializes in shopping centers. The two pilots also were killed.

Another pilot who had just landed at the airport reported hearing no distress calls despite being on the same communications frequency as the aircraft that went down, the National Transportation Safety Board said Wednesday.

The NTSB recovered the downed plane's cockpit voice recorder, which was being sent to a lab in Washington.

Investigators also reviewed surveillance video from a construction company that showed the plane coming in along the tops of trees and banking to the left before it crashed and exploded into flames and a cloud of black smoke, said Bella Dinh-Zarr, vice chairman of the NTSB.

The left wing hit the ground first before the plane crashed into the apartment house, she said.

Officials haven't released names of the victims, but family members at the crash scene said the dead included 50-year-old Diane Smoot, who was with the group from Pebb Enterprises.

"Our hearts are broken this morning with the news of the tragic accident that took the lives of two principals and five employees of Pebb Enterprises," said a statement posted Wednesday on the company website. "We are shocked and deeply saddened for the families, colleagues and friends of those who perished."

The 10-seat Hawker H25 business jet clipped utility wires and crashed into the four-unit apartment building, sparking a fire that destroyed the building, Ohio State Highway Patrol Lt. Bill Haymaker said. Nobody was home at any of the apartments.

## Georgia man sues police after 29 years wrongly jailed

ATLANTA (AP) — A Georgia man says he was frightened into pleading guilty for a murder he didn't commit after police dangled him off a bridge three decades ago, brought charges against his parents and threatened him with the death penalty.

Timothy R. Johnson was 22 in September 1984 when police arrested him and charged him in the killing of a convenience store clerk shot during a robbery in the city of Warner Robins. He pleaded guilty in December of that year — even though he says he didn't commit the crime. He was sentenced to life in prison.

In 2006, the Georgia Supreme Court overturned Johnson's conviction, saying there was nothing to indicate he understood his right not to incriminate himself and his right to confront witnesses.

It took seven more years before he was finally tried and was able to make his case before a jury, which found him not guilty on all charges.

He filed a federal civil rights lawsuit Monday alleging Warner Robins police officers and Houston County sheriff's deputies arrested him without probable cause and participated in malicious prosecution against him. During his 29 years at Georgia State Prison and in the Houston County jail, he was placed in a cramped, windowless cell in solitary confinement

**'It was like being in a bad dream, except you know you're not dreaming.'**

TIMOTHY R. JOHNSON

speaking of his time in prison for a murder he did not commit

for at least part of the time and was given little access to exercise or interaction with other people, the lawsuit says.

At the state prison, he suffered beatings once or twice a week by a group of guards known as the "goon squad," the lawsuit says.

"It was like being in a bad dream, except you know you're not dreaming," Johnson said.

Department of Corrections spokeswoman Gwendolyn Hogan said she could not comment on the alleged conduct. Houston County Sheriff Cullen Talton, whose office oversees the county jail, said he hadn't seen the lawsuit and couldn't comment. Other local officials made similar remarks or didn't return calls.

The lawsuit makes claims including cruel and unusual punishment, due process violations and malicious prosecution. It asks for a jury trial and seeks compensatory and punitive damages.

About 100 miles south of Atlanta, Warner Robins is home to Robins Air Force Base.

Johnson says he was awakened at 3:30 a.m. one day in September 1984 by officers banging on his door. They arrested him on murder and armed robbery charges in the killing of Taressa Stanley several hours earlier.

Johnson says he had been at a friend's house with six or seven other people at the time of Stanley's killing, but his court-appointed attorney didn't investigate his alibi. He was later told that an initial suspect, a high school classmate he hadn't seen in several years, had identified him as the shooter.

He was put in solitary confinement in the Houston County jail and later forced out of his cell by officers, who took him to a bridge and dangled him over the edge, the lawsuit says.

"At some point, I just got so scared that I thought maybe I was having a heart attack or something," he said.

His parents were charged with hindering the apprehension of a criminal even though he didn't live with them and hadn't seen them in several days, Johnson said.

Fearing for his life and for his loved ones, Johnson pleaded guilty in exchange for prosecutors dropping the possibility of the death penalty, the lawsuit says. Once Johnson entered his plea, the charges against his family members were dropped.

## Africa pushed to take migrants back

VALLETTA, Malta (AP) — The European Union pressed African leaders on Wednesday to take back thousands of people who do not qualify for asylum, as overwhelmed Slovenia began building a razor-wire border fence to keep migrants at bay, raising tensions with neighboring Croatia.

Sweden, struggling to manage the influx too, became the latest EU nation to announce the introduction of temporary border controls, as of today.

According to the International Organization for Migration, almost 800,000 people have entered Europe by sea this year. The EU predicts that 3 million more could arrive by 2017.

The Europeans say most Africans are coming in search of work and should be sent home, but many deliberately arrive without documents and must wait months before they are taken back.

At an EU-run summit in Malta, African leaders are set to commit "to cooperate with the EU on return and admission, notably on travel documentation," according to the latest draft of an "Action Plan" being drawn up.

The president of Niger — a major transit route for Africans heading to lawless Libya in the hopes of crossing the Mediterranean to Europe — was cautious about opening the floodgates for people to return.

"We are open to talk about it. Everything will depend on the conditions that will be put in place for when they arrive," President Mahamadou Issoufou told reporters in the Maltese capital Valletta, adding that the best method of solving Europe's migration crisis is to attack the root causes forcing people to leave in the first place.

"We can put security measures in place, but the flow will

remain difficult to stop as long as we don't take measures to reduce poverty," he said.

The EU is working closely with Niger to stem the flow of migrants toward Libya, and ultimately to Europe. It is also trying to seal deals with Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. One was signed with Ethiopia as the two-day summit began.

The move gives Ethiopia — a major hub for people trying to reach Europe — access to money from a 1.8 billion euro (\$1.9 billion) trust fund.

But the head of the African Union expressed concern that moving on returns too quickly might result in the building of reception centers where people are held until they can be granted asylum or be sent home.

Such centers, "whatever we call them, will become de-facto detention centers," AU chairwoman Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma said.

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MEETING

Wednesday, November 18, 2015  
Courtyard Marriott, Middletown  
9 Commerce Drive  
Middletown, RI  
Meeting begins at 6:30 pm

Join us in celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RAB and learn about where we started from and where we are today.

Meet fellow citizens and representatives from the Navy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

Help us plan studies and restorations of cleanup sites

For additional information and our schedule, go to the RAB Internet Web Site at [www.rabnewportri.org](http://www.rabnewportri.org). Additional information is available at the Navy's Internet Web Site at <http://www.navfac.navy.mil>.

If you have any questions, please call 401.841.7671.

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