

IS IT POSSIBLE 20 WERE KILLED AT PANJWAI, 3 BY ANOTHER SOLDIER?

Update: See this post, which gives DOD's latest update on the lack of military operations during the attack.

According to Amy Davidson, the explanation that Robert Bales' 17th victim was an unborn child, which I noted here, has been debunked. That explanation was based on the presence of an unnamed Afghan male—listed as murder charge 5—in Bales' charge sheet. But that explanation missed another unnamed victim—this one a female—under murder charge 4.

So let's take a step back, and consider another possibility: that there are actually more than 17 victims, several of whom Afghans aren't naming, and possibly at least one other soldier known to have killed at least 3 Afghans as well. Here's why I think that may be true.

First, when asked about the discrepancy in numbers yesterday, here's how General John Allen answered.

Q: General, one quick housekeeping thing and then a question. There's been some ongoing confusion over the jump in the number of casualties from 16 to 17. I was wondering if you might be able to discuss that briefly.

[snip]

GEN. ALLEN: I'm getting your one question in three parts here, so give me just a second. And if I miss one, let me — just tell me.

There is a — there was an increase in the number of what we believe to have been those who were killed tragically in this event. But this is — the number increased was based upon the initial

reporting by the Afghans. And so we should not be surprised that in fact, as the investigation went forward, that an – that an additional number was added to that. So that is something that we understand and we accept, and as the investigation goes forward, we'll get greater clarity in that.

[snip]

Q: (Off mic) – 16 versus 17, did the – just to be clear – did the Afghans miscount? Did someone die after the initial assessment?

GEN. ALLEN: We'll have to let that come out in the investigation.

Note that he never says 17 is the correct number. Rather, he says the original number came from the Afghans, "there was an increase in the number," and "we'll have to let" the correct number "come out in the investigation."

All that is perfectly consistent with the number being greater than the 17 the reporters are working with, which is based on Bales' charge sheet.

So now compare Bales' charge sheet with the two lists offered by Afghans.

Bales' charge sheet lists the following victims:

1. Named female
2. Named male
3. Named male
4. Unnamed female
5. Unnamed male
6. Named male
7. Named female
8. Named female
9. Named female
10. Named female
11. Named female

12. Named female
13. Named female
14. Named female
15. Named male
16. Named male
17. Named male

That is, a group of 1 named female and 2 named males, an unnamed male and female, and then a group of a named male, 8 named females, then 3 named males, or a total of 9 named females, 6 named males, and an unnamed male and female (so a total of 10 females and just 7 males).

Here's what the WSJ described:

Mullah Baran's family (1 male victim)

1. Mohammad Dawood

Mohammed Wazir's family (7 female victims—one with no gunshot wounds, 4 male victims)

1. Shah Tarina (female)
2. Bibi Zohra (female)
3. Nabiya (female)
4. Farida (female)
5. Masooma (female)
6. Faizallah (male)
7. Ismatullah (male)
8. Akhar Mohammed (male)
9. Bibi Nzaia (female)
10. Essa Mohammed (male)
11. Palwasha (female; note, she had no apparent bullet wounds)

Syed Jaan (1 female and 3 male victims)

1. Wife (female)
2. Brother (male)
3. Brother-in-law (male)
4. Nephew (male)

That is, from the WSJ count, we get 8 male and 8 female victims, presumably all named. The Al Jazeera list appears to match the WSJ one, assuming that Khudaydad, Nazar Mohamed, Payendo, and Robeena are Syed Jaan's family members.

In other words, the lists coming from the Afghans have 8 males and 8 females (with the caveat that Palwasha may not have been shot and if so shouldn't be among the Bales' victims, all of whom were murdered by shooting with a firearm). And the US Government has a list of 10 females (9 named) and just 7 males (6 named).

So there are at least 3 people on Bales' charge sheet (1 named female, 1 unnamed female, and 1 unnamed male) that aren't among the Afghan lists. And there are at least 2 named males who don't appear on Bales' charge sheet.

That suggests two things to me, both speculation at this point. First, that the USG knows of another soldier that killed at least 3 people. And second, that the USG believes the Afghans hid the existence—and in two cases, the identity—of three of the victims of this killing.

Update: DOD Spokesperson William Speaks provided this initial response, which I consider very carefully parsed (and which of course doesn't address the number discrepancy in the last):

The evidence available to the investigation team indicates 17 murder victims, as is outlined in the charge sheet. To suggest that Gen. Allen's answers yesterday would be "consistent" with more victims ignores the fact that the questions posed to him were in the context of 17 rather than 16 victims.

One other possibility is that there were people killed in a night raid that are now considered legitimate victims—perhaps people who were responsible for the IED the week before the raid—in addition to 17 people who were not considered legitimate targets and therefore are

being treated as murder victims.