

MCCLATCHY CONFIRMS ONE SHOOTER AT ALKOZAI

McClatchy has gone back to do more reporting on the Panjwai massacre that happened in March. (h/t Agonist) It provides a gruesome account of what happened at Alkozai. But also provides more details on the attack and the investigation.

McClatchy's interview of survivors from Alkozai appear to confirm what had appeared to be the case already: there was just one killer at that village (though they appear not to have interviewed anyone from Najiban, where witnesses testified to multiple killers).

Rafiullah told McClatchy that Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, phoned him in the aftermath of the attack and U.S. authorities later interviewed him while he was in the hospital. "Two times they talked to me," he said.

A day or two after the massacre, he also spoke to the man Karzai had appointed as his chief investigator into the killings, Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi, the Afghan army chief .

"To all of them I said the same thing," Rafiullah said. "I saw only one shooter."

The story reveals that after multiple US interviews (and fewer Afghan ones), one of the surviving adults at Alkozai was grilled about setting the IED that had gone off the week before the Robert Bales attack.

The only official contact he'd had since his discharge from the hospital was when he was summoned, still wounded, to Kandahar city and interrogated by an officer from Afghanistan's much-feared

intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security.

“That man was a bastard,” Naim said. “He accused me of having laid IEDs” – improvised explosive devices, or homemade bombs – “before the massacre to target the American forces.”

Naim said he’d previously seen Taliban members placing such devices near his home in Alkozai, but that he’d told them not to, as he and his family might be targeted in response. Like many civilians in southern Afghanistan, he felt he was caught in a struggle between the insurgents and U.S.-led forces. Sadiqullah had been wounded earlier by shrapnel from an American mortar round that had landed near his home.

Sadiqullah underwent surgery at the U.S. military hospital in Kandahar after that attack, too, and his wound had barely healed by the night of the massacre.

Sadiqullah is 11, and he has already hospitalized twice this year by American fire. Not only is that a testament to the simmering relations between Americans and villagers in Panjwai. But it’s a pretty good indication of whether we’re going to be able to win the support of the next generation of Afghan fighters.