

'Tis the season



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The Ross Volunteers perform rifle drills and lead the 77th annual Holiday Parade held Sunday afternoon near Texas A&M. The Hollywood-themed parade had

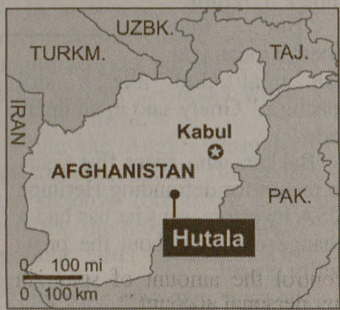
109 entries and traveled two miles down Texas Avenue into Bryan. Santa's helpers also collected letters from children along the route.

U.S. gunship shoots children
Anger and confusion follow in Afghan village

By Aijaz Rahi
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. air strike kills nine children

An American warplane targeting a wanted Taliban commander mistakenly killed nine children in an Afghan mountain village.



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

HUTALA, Afghanistan — Hats and shoes littered a blood-stained field in this desolate Afghan village Sunday, a day after U.S. warplanes — targeting a terror suspect — mistakenly killed nine children.

American officials offered their regrets Sunday and said they were "deeply saddened" by the deaths. The United Nations called for an investigation. And the Afghan government urged the U.S.-led coalition hunting Taliban and al-Qaida fighters to make sure such an accident is never repeated.

In Hutala on Sunday, a line of fresh graves marked the tragedy, and village men stood quietly by a stream in a dusty field where the children had been playing. They seemed as bewildered as they were angry.

"First they fire their rockets. Then they say it was a mistake," Haji Amir Mohammed told The Associated Press, as dozens of American soldiers sent to investigate the incident offered condolences or lay in the warming winter sun. "How can we forgive them?"

Villagers said the young victims had been playing with marbles in a dusty field beside mud homes in this impoverished valley, some 150 miles southwest of Kabul, when the A-10 ground attack aircraft homed in.

Military officials said Sunday they had no idea children were in the area when they decided to attack. U.S.

Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said the suspect targeted and killed was a former Taliban commander named Mullah Wazir, adding that he was "deeply saddened" by the "tragic loss of innocent life."

Khalilzad said the former commander "had bragged of his personal involvement in attacks on innocent Afghan citizens," including aid groups and Afghans working on the Kabul-Kandahar road, a site of frequent violence.

Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, a spokesman for the coalition, told the AP in Hutala that it had appeared to the pilot of the aircraft that "just that person that we wanted, that terrorist, was in the field. So we fired on him."

Troops discovered the children's bodies after rushing to the scene to verify that they had got Wazir. U.S. officers flew in

Sunday to apologize to village elders, Hilferty said.

But residents were adamant that the military had acted on bogus intelligence. Many said the man killed was not Wazir, and that the former district commander under the Taliban had left the village some days before the attack.

"There are no terrorists, no Taliban or al-Qaida here," said Abdul Majid Farooqi. "Just poor people."

The 11,500 U.S.-led troops hunting Taliban and al-Qaida remnants in south and east Afghanistan often are supported by air power, and there have been a string of military mishaps.

The worst occurred in July 2002, when Afghan officials said 48 civilians at a wedding party were killed and 117 wounded by a U.S. Air Force AC-130 gunship in Uruzgan province, which borders Ghazni province.

On April 9, a U.S. warplane mistakenly bombed a home in the eastern town of Shkin, killing 11 civilians. Another air strike in Nuristan province in eastern Afghanistan on Oct. 31 reportedly killed at least eight civilians in a house.

"This incident, which follows similar incidents, adds to a sense of insecurity and fear in the country," Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. Special Representative to Afghanistan, said in Kabul.

The Afghan government said it fully supported fighting terrorism but urged the U.S.-led coalition to "be very careful not to repeat such tragedies."

NEWS IN BRIEF

College Board adds Chinese to Advanced Placement program

NEW YORK (AP) — The College Board, which offers talented high school students a chance to earn college credits, announced it will offer an Advanced Placement program in Chinese language and culture.

The new program is a joint venture of the College Board and the Chinese government, which will contribute \$685,000 to develop the tests — about half the cost.

Muslim football tournament's team names sparks protest

IRVINE, Calif. (AP) — It was planned as a way to bring young athletes together for a weekend of fun, but when participants in the Muslim Football tournament started naming their teams

Intifada, Soldiers of Allah and Mujahideen, Jewish leaders took offense.

Intifada means "uprising" in Arabic and is the term applied to suicide bombings and other attacks against Israelis in the Middle East. Mujahideen means holy warrior.

DuPont-Columbia University awards yield 13 winners

NEW YORK (AP) — Coverage of the war in Iraq and government watchdog reports dominated this year's Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, with the PBS series "Frontline" taking three of the 13 Silver Batons given for excellence in television and radio journalism.

The awards were established in 1942 by the late Jessie Ball duPont in memory of her husband. The awards period covered July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003.

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1.06	F	SI ₃	2900 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	1.00	G	VS ₁	5460 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
1.03	H	VS ₂	4575 ⁰⁰	.92	F	VS ₁	3500 ⁰⁰
1.00	H	SI ₁	4350 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.90	I	SI ₂	2500 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.99	F	SI ₂	3300 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.87	F	SI ₁	3100 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.95	I	VS ₁	3450 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.82	F	VS ₂	3075 ⁰⁰
.92	G	SI ₂	4327 ⁰⁰ IDEAL CUT EGL Cert.	.73	E	VS ₂	2920 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.92	H	VS ₁	3875 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.72	E	VS ₂	3100 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.85	G	SI ₂	2400 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.71	H	VS ₂	2270 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.78	E	VS ₂	2575 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.70	H	VS ₂	2100 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.73	F	SI ₁	2235 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.66	E	SI ₁	1625 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.55	E	SI ₁	1525 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.616	G	VS ₁	1450 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.54	D	SI ₂	1575 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.60	H	VS ₁	1400 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.52	F	VS ₂	1175 ⁰⁰	.602	G	VS ₁	1375 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.51	F	VS ₂	1685 ⁰⁰	.591	G	VS ₁	1500 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.45	I	SI ₂	475 ⁰⁰	.572	E	VS ₁	1545 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.42	I	VS ₂	575 ⁰⁰	.56	E	VVS ₁	1600 ⁰⁰ GIA Cert.
MARQUISE DIAMONDS				OVAL DIAMONDS			
1.37	I	SI ₃	3150 ⁰⁰	.56	H	VS ₂	1250 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
1.21	K	SI ₃	3450 ⁰⁰	.54	D	SI ₂	1250 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.48	H	SI ₁	875 ⁰⁰	.524	G	VS ₁	1170 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.31	K	VS ₁	395 ⁰⁰	.51	D	VS ₂	1350 ⁰⁰ GIA Cert.
ASHER DIAMONDS (SQUARE EMERALD CUT)				OVAL DIAMONDS			
1.07	H	VS ₂	4100 ⁰⁰ GIA Cert.	.84	E	VS ₂	3150 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
1.02	I	VVS ₁	4100 ⁰⁰ GIA Cert.	.83	D	VS ₁	3375 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
1.01	F	VS ₂	4930 ⁰⁰ GIA Cert.	.81	E	VS ₂	3040 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
ANTIQUÉ CUT DIAMONDS				OVAL DIAMONDS			
1.98	I	SI ₃	5750 ⁰⁰	.72	I	SI ₂	1595 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
1.88	J	SI ₂	4950 ⁰⁰	.54	H	SI ₂	950 ⁰⁰
1.81	I	SI ₂	5270 ⁰⁰	.52	G	SI ₂	750 ⁰⁰
1.72	I	I ₁	3950 ⁰⁰	.32	H	SI ₁	550 ⁰⁰
1.71	J	SI ₃	4500 ⁰⁰ Cushion Cut	OLD EUROPEAN CUT			
1.63	G	SI ₂	6800 ⁰⁰	1.18	H	SI ₃	3300 ⁰⁰
1.03	I	SI ₂	2950 ⁰⁰ Cushion Cut	1.07	K	VS ₂	2250 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.98	I	SI ₃	1850 ⁰⁰	1.03	I	SI ₃	2400 ⁰⁰
.93	K	VS ₁	1950 ⁰⁰	.91	I	I ₁	1850 ⁰⁰
.82	H	SI ₂	1900 ⁰⁰	.46	H	SI ₁	675 ⁰⁰
.76	I	SI ₂	1475 ⁰⁰	PEAR CUT			
.74	J	SI ₂	950 ⁰⁰	.92	H	SI ₁	2945 ⁰⁰
EMERALD CUT DIAMONDS				RADIANT CUT			
1.52	I	VVS ₁	6490 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.91	I	I ₁	1095 ⁰⁰
1.12	E	SI ₃	2950 ⁰⁰	.64	I	SI ₁	1250 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
.58	I	SI ₁	1150 ⁰⁰	.45	I	VS ₁	560 ⁰⁰
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