



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 17, 2012

Afghan Probe Claims 15 to 20 U.S. Soldiers Involved in Massacre

"The villages are one and a half kilometre from the American military base," Hamidzai Lali said. "We are convinced that one soldier cannot kill so many people in two villages within one hour at the same time, and the 16 civilians, most of them children and women, have been killed by the two groups." The investigation indicates 15 to 20 soldiers took part in the killings, said Lali, who has asked the Afghan government, the United Nations and the international community to ensure the perpetrators are punished in Afghanistan. He expressed anger that the one soldier arrested by the U.S. military in connection with the murders had been flown from Afghanistan to Kuwait. People interviewed by the lawmakers warned that if the killers were not punished, they would launch a movement against the Afghan authorities who had agreed to the presence of foreign troops in the country in 2001, Lali said.



Meanwhile, U.S military authorities on Friday released the name of the suspect they are holding, after several days of closely guarded secrecy surrounding his identity. He is Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, a 38-year-old father of two and veteran of three tours of duty in Iraq, where he was twice injured in combat, and two in Afghanistan. He has been transferred from Kuwait to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he is being held in a medium-security prison. His wife and children have been moved from their home in Lake Tapps, Washington, to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the sergeant's home base. His identity, first reported by Fox News, had been withheld out of concern for his family's safety, military officials said. Though he was arrested shortly after last Sunday's killings he has still not been formally charged, the [New York Times reported](#) Friday.

"When it all comes out, it will be a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues — he just snapped," said a Pentagon official, speaking on the condition of anonymity told the *Times*, an allegation disputed by the sergeant's lawyer. Seattle attorney John Henry Browne questioned the drinking allegations and said his client's marriage was sound. He said Bales and his family were upset over his being sent to the Middle East wars for the fifth time. "He and his family were told that his tours in the Middle East were over," Browne told the *Times*. "I think that it would be fair to say that he and the family were not happy that he was going back."

Bales's combat injuries came during his second and third tour in Iraq, the first occurring during an effort to recover a downed Apache helicopter in the city of Najaf. In 2010, during his third deployment,



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Bales suffered a head injury and possible traumatic brain injury when a Humvee he was riding in flipped over, possibly due to a roadside bomb, Browne said. The injury could have resulted in personality changes and loss of impulse control, he said

"He's never said anything antagonistic about Muslims," the attorney told the *Times*. "He's in general been very mild-mannered."

Meanwhile, Afghan President Hamid Karzai accused American officials of not cooperating with the legislative delegation investigating the massacre. Karzai, who on Thursday called for an end to the U.S. and NATO combat role in the country by 2013, said Friday he was "at the end of the rope" over the killings. His comments followed his meeting with the families of the victims and came just hours after a telephone conversation between Karzai and President Obama. Officials of the Obama administration said the phone call between the two leaders went well.

Photo of Robert Bales: AP Images



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