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Libyan rebels claim Gaddafi son killed

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A Libyan rebel spokesman has claimed that a NATO airstrike on the western city of Zlitan has killed Khamis Gaddafi, one of the sons of Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Mohammed Zawawi, a spokesman for the rebels, said on Friday that Khamis was among 32 people killed in the strike.

"Overnight there was an aircraft attack by NATO on the Gaddafi operations room in Zlitan and there are around 32 Gaddafi troops killed. One of them is Khamis," said Zawawi, a spokesman for the United Revolutionary Forces.

A NATO official at operations headquarters in Naples, Italy, told the Reuters news agency that while he was aware of the report, he could not confirm it.

"We cannot confirm anything right now, because we don't have people on the ground, but we are trying to find out what we can," he said.

According to NATO's regular operational media update, the alliance flew 117 sorties on Thursday, of which 44 were flown as "strike sorties", indicating that munitions were carried.

The targets hit included an "ammunition storage facility", a "military facility", two multiple rocket launchers and one surface-to-air missile system in Zlitan, the statement says.

It also said that it hit two "military facilities" in Tripoli, in addition to 11 other targets in various

areas.

There was no immediate comment from the government after the claim that Khamis Gaddafi had been killed, which Zawawi said was based on reports from spies within the ranks of Gaddafi's forces.

Khamis, 28, is the commander of the Libyan army's 32nd Brigade, which rebels say has been at the forefront of the government's defence of Zlitan, the last major western town on the road to Tripoli from the rebel-held east of the country.

'Civilians killed'

The Gaddafi government claims that NATO airstrikes in Zlitan on Thursday killed a mother and her two sons.

Officials showed journalists the house they say was hit by NATO bombs.

A spokesman for the military alliance confirmed that an airstrike had taken place, but said that the bombs had hit a "command and control site".

"We always take seriously allegations of civilian casualties and are looking into it, but we have no evidence at this stage that this was caused by an air strike," he said.