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Al Jazeera

NATO 'knew' it was firing at Pakistan troops

12/15/2011



The attack that left 24 Pakistani troops dead sparked angry protests across the country [AFP]

Pakistani officials say NATO forces knew they were opening fire on Pakistani forces, and even apologised to Pakistani officers, throughout the friendly fire incident on a military checkpoint that killed 24 troops near the Afghan border in November.

Pakistani officials on Thursday briefed reporters in Washington on their findings, drawn from

interviews with survivors and local residents in the remote, mountainous area.

Results of NATO's official investigation are due next week.

Al Jazeera's Rosiland Jordan, reporting from Washington, DC, said it could be an attempt by Pakistani officials to shape public opinion before the NATO report is released.

"The Pakistanis do want to get out in front, they do want to get their side of story, which is that they were attacked unprovoked. When they told NATO and ISAF that they needed to call back their helicopters, they were told that they would yet the attack continued," she said.

"The Pakistanis, as you might expect, they are quite angry because an official apology has not been offered to their government."

The officials presented the assembled reporters a recreation of the incident from the Pakistani army's point of view, with Powerpoint charts, maps, photographs and information drawn from interviews with surviving troops.

Contact re-established

A slide titled "Mistaken Identity Not Possible" detailed the numerous ways NATO and the Pakistanis keep track of each other at the border, including NATO's monitoring of the Pakistani border posts' radio transmissions, which were frantically reporting being under fire by NATO aircraft.

US officials believe confusion and miscommunication between a joint US-Afghan patrol and the Pakistani border posts led to the tragedy.

Pakistani military officials have re-established contact, but have kept closed **two border crossings** used by NATO into Afghanistan, in protest over the deadliest incident yet involving NATO forces against Pakistan.

General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, Pakistan's army chief, has re-established contact with US General John Allen, the coalition's top commander in Afghanistan.

Two Pakistani military liaison officers have also returned to NATO coordination centres in Kabul, Al Jazeera's Bernard Smith reported from the Afghan capital.

They were withdrawn recently for consultation over border issues.

The attack sparked anger across the country, where many Pakistanis said that the NATO mission, which the US took part in, violated its sovereignty.