

WAS MOHAMMED WAZIR'S 2-YEAR OLD, PALWASHA, THE VICTIM OF A REVENGE KILLING?

The Wall Street Journal has the story on the Panjwai killing that should have been written on Monday, not Friday. It tells the story of the massacre from the perspectives of Mohammed Wazir, Mullah Baran, and Syed Jaan, Afghan men who lost family members in the attack.

Wazir, for example, describes what it's like to lose his 12 and 13-year old sons, and what it's like to find the fabric his wife planned to use to make outfits for Eid.

Mr. Wazir says he is haunted by guilt. "It hurts me a lot when I remember occasions when I shouted at my sons because I asked them to do something and they ignored it," he says. "I feel so very sorry now."

At least, he says, he can take solace in knowing he had bought his two sons two new bicycles, which they had so badly wanted, before they died.

Mr. Wazir says his family had rolls of freshly bought cloth that his wife and mother intended to use to sew new outfits for his children for the Eid al Fitr Islamic festival—still five months away. "It is still there—and there is no one to wear them," he sighed.

He also suggests his youngest child—2 year old Palwasha—may have been burned alive.

Mr. Wazir says the corpse of his 2-year-old daughter Palwasha was amid the charred bodies. He believes she was burned alive. "I checked her body, and there were no bullet marks."

Wazir also mentioned a story reported elsewhere today—that the Americans had recently conducted night raids in retaliation for an IED they blamed on the village; the frequent night raids meant no one reacted when the intruders came.

As the Australian elaborates on that part of the story, the IED went off on March 7 or 8 (the attack was March 11). In response, Americans lined the male villagers up and said they'd get revenge.

Ghulam Rasool, a tribal elder from Panjwai district, gave an account of the bombing at a March 16 meeting in Kabul with Mr Karzai in the wake of the shootings.

"After the incident, they took the wreckage of their destroyed tank and their wounded people from the area," Mr Rasool said. "After that, they came back to the village nearby the explosion site.

"The soldiers called all the people to come out of their houses and from the mosque," he said.

"The Americans told the villagers 'A bomb exploded on our vehicle. ... We will get revenge for this incident by killing at least 20 of your people,'" Mr Rasool said. "These are the reasons why we say they took their revenge by killing women and children in the villages."

Now, we're still unable to discern which of the many competing narratives lies closer to the truth (aside from Wazir and the other family members' descriptions of their grief).

But it does seem that if these threats of revenge took place in the week before the massacre—particularly if the IED attack caused Sergeant Robert Bales' buddy to lose his leg—the US loses credibility by not admitting as much.

That may not affect the story about whether or

not Bales operated alone, but it is part of the story.