

# The World; Illegal Arms Cache Blows Up in Northern Afghanistan, Killing 28; An official says local warlords probably have dozens of such weapons depots in the area.

Kazem, Halima

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## ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

The arms depot was in an underground bunker of a house belonging to the commander of a private militia in Bajgha, about 75 miles north of Kabul, the capital. "We have received word that the commander, Jalal Bajgha, has survived the explosion, but seven or eight of his family members have died and the immediate area of the explosion has been flattened," said Latfullah Mashal, an Interior Ministry spokesman.

"We didn't know about this arms depot. These local commanders are hiding these weapons from the government and from the U.N.'s disarmament program," said Mohammed Hassan Haryan, spokesman for the governor of Baghlan province.

U.N. officials said there were more than 30,000 tons of weapons in Afghanistan and about 224 known arms depots.

## FULL TEXT

An illicit weapons cache exploded Monday in a village in northern Afghanistan, killing 28 people and injuring more than 13.

The arms depot was in an underground bunker of a house belonging to the commander of a private militia in Bajgha, about 75 miles north of Kabul, the capital. "We have received word that the commander, Jalal Bajgha, has survived the explosion, but seven or eight of his family members have died and the immediate area of the explosion has been flattened," said Latfullah Mashal, an Interior Ministry spokesman.

The cause of the early-morning blast was unknown, and a team of 20 government investigators was sent to the area. The cache was said to have contained mortar bombs, artillery rounds and other ordnance.

"We didn't know about this arms depot. These local commanders are hiding these weapons from the government and from the U.N.'s disarmament program," said Mohammed Hassan Haryan, spokesman for the governor of Baghlan province.

Haryan said that there were probably dozens of weapons and ammunition stores in the province but that authorities didn't have the resources to find them or the power to seize them.

Most of the weapons are remnants of almost three decades of conflict.

U.N. officials said there were more than 30,000 tons of weapons in Afghanistan and about 224 known arms depots.

"Arms that are not usable are destroyed, and the others are brought to Kabul and added to the government's official military stockpile," said U.N. representative Ahmad Jan Nawzadi.

The explosion highlights a significant roadblock to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Most citizens outside Kabul live in fear of the armed warlords who control much of the fragmented country.

"The government officials in many of the provinces can't control the local warlords. Many of them need the support of the warlords for their own protection," said Juma Khan, a resident of Pol-e- Khomri, the capital of Baghlan.

Although the U.N. says it has disarmed close to 50,000 militia members and collected more than 40,000 pieces of ordnance, the program has been criticized as moving too slowly with a mandate that is too limited.

A recent report by the International Crisis Group, a Brussels- based think tank, estimates that 850 unofficial militias with more than 65,000 members remain outside the scope of the formal disarmament process.

### Illustration

Caption: GRAPHIC: MAP: Afghanistan; CREDIT: Los Angeles Times

Credit: Special to The Times

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