

RELEASED: Thursday May 26, 2016

Foreign Correspondent: Surgical Strike

Airs Tuesday, May 31 at 9.30pm on ABC & iview

The anatomy of a military scandal... Why did US forces attack a Medecins Sans Frontieres hospital in Afghanistan, killing 42 people? An Australian doctor is among the survivors who tell their chilling stories.

It had a very particular "VOO-PAH" sort of noise. It vibrated in your chest. I waited for this moment of clarity or my life flashing before my eyes, the moment I'd seen on TV shows. It was just overwhelming fear – Australian doctor Kathleen Thomas

It was the instant in which an American AC-130 gunship pumped the first of 211 artillery shells into the MSF-run hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, last October 3.

The whole building – the glass, the ceiling, the iron – everything collapsed – Afghan doctor Esmatullah Esmat

Horribly wounded patients screamed for morphine. Hospital staff frantically triaged the maimed. At the end of it all, amid smouldering ruins, 42 patients, family and medical staff were dead, and 37 wounded.

My brother and my sister are always crying. Nothing will compensate for the loss of my father – Samiullah, son of a patient killed on the operating table

People here were telling me that they will not bomb the area. But they did bomb – father of three year old girl Shaesta, who had been recovering from a leg amputation

So why did the Americans attack? Was it anything to do with MSF's strict neutrality policy that saw it treat wounded Taliban just like any other patients – a policy deeply resented by Afghanistan's military? And have charity-run hospitals like MSF's now become "fair game" in the world's conflict zones?

In Foreign Correspondent's "Surgical Strike", survivors including Australian Kathleen Thomas relive the terror and chaos inside the hospital as it was pounded by the gunship.

And what of the aftermath? What is the public to make of shifting explanations from the US military which apologised for "a tragic mistake" but rejected calls for an independent inquiry or war crimes investigation?

"Surgical Strike" - produced by Mark Corcoran - on *Foreign Correspondent* 9.30pm Tuesday May 31 and 10.30am Thursday June 2 on ABC TV, and 6.30pm Saturday June 4 on ABC News 24. Also on [iview](#).

You can view previous episodes on **ABC iview** and online at: abc.net.au/foreign

Join the conversation: **#ForeignCorrespondent**

Follow Foreign Correspondent on Twitter: **@ForeignOfficial**

Facebook: **ABCForeignCorrespondent**

For further information contact:

Chris Chamberlin, News Publicist, ABC TV Publicity

02 83333 2154 | 0404 075 749 | chamberlin.chris@abc.net.au

@popculturechris