Beat: Miscellaneous

Suicide bomber kills 3 NATO soldiers, 11 Afghans in country's east

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USPA News - At least fourteen people were killed on Monday and nearly 60 others were injured when a suicide bomber riding a motorcycle detonated his explosives near a coalition convoy in eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

The attack happened at around 8:40 a.m. local time when the suicide bomber blew himself up near a convoy belonging to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Chowk Mujahid square, which is located near the provincial governor`s office in Khost City, the capital of the province which carries the same name. A spokesperson for the Afghan Interior Ministry said eleven Afghans, including four members of the Afghan National Police, were killed while 57 others were injured. The wounded, among them three Afghan police officers, were rushed to a local hospital where several remained in a serious condition. ISAF confirmed three coalition service members were also killed, raising the overall death toll to at least fourteen. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of those killed or injured in this terrible attack," ISAF spokesman Brigadier General John Madower said. Because the multinational force defers the release of specific details to national authorities, the nationalities of the service members who were killed were not immediately known. "It is ISAF policy to defer casualty identification procedures to the relevant national authorities," ISAF said in a brief statement, giving no specific details. The alliance also declines to confirm possible injuries among coalition service members, again per its policy. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the deadly attack on Monday and described the suicide bomber as a "heroic" Muslim fighter. He said the attack was carried out by a Taliban fighter identified as Muhammad Shoaib, an apparent resident of Kunduz province. The claim could not be independently verified. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul strongly condemned the suicide bombing and expressed its condolences. "This tragic attack further illustrates that the insurgents have no respect for the safety and security of the Afghan people," an embassy spokesperson said. "The United States mourns the loss of life in Khost and our sympathies extend to all the victims and their families. We remain an unwavering partner of the Afghan people in the fight against international terrorism." The deaths on Monday raise the number of coalition troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year to 347, according to unofficial figures. A total of 566 ISAF troops were killed in Afghanistan in 2011, down from 711 in 2010. A majority of the fallen troops were American and were killed in the country`s south, which is plagued by IED attacks on troops and civilians. There are currently more than 112,500 ISAF troops in Afghanistan, including some 74,400 U.S. troops and 9,500 British soldiers. U.S. President Barack Obama previously ordered a drawdown of 23,000 U.S. troops by the end of this summer, and 15,000 of them have already left in recent weeks. Foreign combat troops are due to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

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