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The Associated Press

Suicide attackers Kill 5 in eastern Afghanistan

5/10/2012

Suicide attackers wearing police uniforms killed five people when they were caught trying to sneak through a checkpoint Thursday in eastern Afghanistan, security officials said.

The six attackers all died in the botched operation in Paktika province's Yayakhil district, said Dawlit Khan Zadran, the provincial police chief.

He said that the men were on their way to attack a district government office when they tried to get through the checkpoint. Police became suspicious and told them to stop, the men refused, and a gunbattle broke out.

During the hour-long fight, four attackers detonated their explosives-rigged suicide vests and two were shot and killed, Zadran said. The blasts killed two civilians, two local police officers and one national police officer.

Another two local police officers and one national police officer were wounded, he said.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Afghan Local Police is a force created with the help of the American military. Members come from the local community and receive a small government salary to man checkpoints and oversee security in their area.

The Taliban launch a fresh offensive every spring as snows melt and the weather warms across Afghanistan, making both travel and fighting easier. It normally leads to a surge of militant attacks as they attempt to retake lost territory and intimidate the government.

Thursday's attack was the latest in a string of violence in Paktika. On Tuesday, militants there shot and killed four Education Ministry employees and a bodyguard. On Sunday, four gunmen took over a tall building in the province and started shooting down into surrounding government compounds, wounding one civilian before security forces killed them.