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Xinhua

Militants kill pro-gov't elder in eastern Afghanistan

5/29/2012

Suspected Taliban militants shot dead a pro-government tribal elder in eastern Afghan province of Ghazni, an official said on Tuesday.

"A prominent elder named Hajji Mohammad was killed by armed men when attending prayers in a mosque in Andar district late on Monday night," administrative chief of Andar district, Yousuf Sarhadi, told Xinhua.

The elder was shot several times and died on the spot, Sarhadi said, adding the attackers fled the area shortly after the incident.

He blamed Taliban for the attack. This is second incident of its kind in a single day. Armed men shot and killed Raz Mohammad, a member of community council in Sangin district of southern Helmand province on Monday.

The Taliban insurgents, who have been waging more than a decade- long insurgency, announced that they would launch a spring offensive starting from May 3 to target Afghan forces as well as U. S. and NATO troops across the country.

The insurgent group has warned the civilians to stay away from official gatherings, military convoys and centers regarded as the legitimate targets by militants besides warning people against supporting government and foreign troops.

Despite the presence of more than 130,000 U.S. and NATO, the post Taliban Afghanistan has been seeing Taliban-led violent incidents as seven civilians were injured when a rocket fired by militants hit an area in Ghazni city, earlier Tuesday.

In another development, four Taliban militants were killed when Afghan army and NATO-led coalition forces launched an operation against Taliban hideouts in Zurmat district of neighbouring Paktika province Monday night.

The joint forces also found and sized a handful of weapons, a district official Gulab Shah told Xinhua on Tuesday.