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4 Afghans, 2 New Zealand soldiers killed in Taliban ambush in peaceful Bamiyan

August 05, 2012

Taliban-led insurgents killed two New Zealand soldiers and four Afghan intelligence officers Saturday in an ambush in the peaceful central province of Bamiyan, local officials said Sunday.

The intelligence officers, members of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghanistan's spy agency, had received a report of explosives and IEDs stockpiled in the Baghak area of Shibar district and mounted an operation to seize them, said Abdul Rahman Ahmadi, the spokesman for the Bamiyan's governor. But the Taliban were waiting to ambush the officers, Ahmadi said.

The besieged intelligence officers summoned assistance from New Zealand troops based in Bamiyan. When the New Zealand troops arrived, they were also fired on. Two New Zealanders were killed and six wounded, Ahmadi said.

In addition to the dead, 10 intelligence officers were wounded along with one Afghan police and a civilian.

A spokesman to the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), as the coalition is officially known, confirmed the death of two ISAF soldiers on Saturday but refused to provide any further details.

However, the New Zealand Defense Force confirmed that their two soldiers were killed and another six were wounded, Reuters reported.

“The New Zealand Defense Force was responding to local security force coming under attack and it developed into a serious incident,” said Jonathan Coleman, New Zealand’s defense minister.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the ambush in a statement posted on the Taliban website. He said four New Zealand soldiers were killed and four others were wounded. Taliban reports of casualties usually are exaggerated.

Bamiyan, in central Afghanistan, is dominated the Hazara ethnic group, most of whom are Shiite Muslims. The province is traditionally anti-Taliban, who are Sunni Muslims, but there has been an increase in violence there in recent months.

“The roads between neighboring provinces are totally unsafe,” said Ahmadi.

Ahmadi called for more assistance from the government of President Hamid Karzai. “The Bamiyan provincial government is not capable of fighting insurgents in this province. We need help,” he said.

Bamiyan’s police chief echoed that plea, saying his officers are not properly equipped. “The police force in Bamiyan lacks heavy weapons,” the chief, Gen. Juma Gilki Yardam, said.

Afghanistan’s lower house of parliament dismissed two key ministers Saturday over their failure to respond to cross-border shelling by Pakistan into Afghanistan and deteriorating security in the country.

Abdul Rahim Wardak, the defense minister, and Bismillah Mohammadi, the interior minister, also were accused of corruption and nepotism. Both ministers denied the allegations. Sunday, Karzai allowed both disqualified ministers to stay as acting ministers until replacements are named.