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20 dead in Taliban attack on NATO convoy

Oct 1, 2012

Up to 20 people, including three foreign soldiers, were killed in a massive suicide bomb attack on a NATO convoy in southeastern Khost province on Monday morning, officials said.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) confirmed three of its soldiers and an Afghan translator were killed in the attack, which targeted a patrol passing about 100 meters from the governor's office in Khost City.

Six Afghan policemen and 10 civilians were also killed and 62 others wounded, the governor's office said. "Today, at around 8:30 am, a suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted a joint patrol in a crowded area of Khost City."

In Kabul, the Ministry of Interior said seven civilians, four police officials were among the fatalities. Another 53 civilians were wounded in the attack, according to a statement from the ministry, which said the casualties included women and children.

A local police official confided to Pajhwok Afghan News that four Afghan police officers, including the commander of the Khost Rapid Reaction Force, Lt. Col. Mubarak Shah, and six civilians were among the dead. Dozens of civilians were injured, he added.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, identified the bomber as Shoaib Kunduzi -- a member of the militant movement. He claimed six US soldiers, one of their interpreters, the Rapid Reaction Force provincial chief and six policemen were killed.

Following the explosion, he said, NATO troops shot dead two civilians and wounded several others. But the claim could not be verified independently.

President Hamid Karzai denounced the assault as intolerable, and condoled with the victims' relatives. He also prayed for the swift recovery of the injured, the Presidential Palace said in a statement.

The US embassy also condemned the bombing, saying it further illustrated that the insurgents had no respect for the safety and security of the Afghan people.

"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."

Earlier in the day, Public Health Director Dr. Amir Badshah Mangal said three dead bodies and 30 injured people were transported to hospital. He added the victims were all civilians, with many of the injured in critical condition.

Doctors at the Rahman Baba Hospital said they had received six bodies and 15 injured. Another 16 injured individuals were evacuated to the Matoon Baba Hospital in the city.