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Al Jazeera

Afghan police commander killed in blast

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A large blast has hit the compound of the governor of Afghanistan's northern Takhar province, killing at least six people, including General Daood Daood, the regional police commander, and several German soldiers, officials say.

A suicide bomber detonated his explosives-laden vest in a room in the office complex within the compound where high-ranking Afghan officials were meeting members of the international coalition forces on Saturday, Faiz Mohammad Tawhedi, a spokesman for the provincial governor, Abdul Jabar Taqwa, told the Associated Press news agency.

"What we know is the guy who carried out the attack had a police uniform on," Tawhedi said. "How he entered the meeting room and why he was not searched, we don't know."

Dr Hassain Basech, the health director of Takhar, confirmed the deaths of Daood; General Shah Jahan Noori, a provincial police chief; a secretary to Taqwa, the Takhar governor; and one of Daood's bodyguards.

Basech said 10 other Afghans were wounded, including Taqwa who suffered burns to his head, hands and back.

'Nuclear attack'

Daood, the most prominent casualty of Saturday's bombing, was a former deputy interior minister for counternarcotics.

Before that, he was a close associate of Ahmad Shah Masood, the influential leader who commanded the Northern Alliance and died in an al-Qaeda suicide bombing two days before the September 11, 2001, attacks that provoked the US invasion.

Al Jazeera's Qais Azimy, reporting from Kabul, said Daood is "the highest Afghan security official to have been killed since 2001".

"This attack is a big shock for the officials here in Afghanistan. One top official described the incident to me as a 'nuclear attack' against Afghan security forces."

The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said in a statement released later on Saturday that two ISAF service members had died, adding that it is their policy to "defer casualty identification procedures to the relevant national authorities".

The German military told the online magazine *Der Spiegel* that two German troops were killed and that General Markus Kneip, ISAF's commander for northern Afghanistan, was wounded along with three of his soldiers.

Major Tim James, an ISAF spokesman, confirmed that Kneip was in the compound's office complex at time of attack but had survived.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the Takhar attack, saying that it had been planning for months as part of its spring offensive called Badr - a reference to a famous battle in Islamic history.

A separate violent incident was reported on Saturday in the ongoing battle between the Taliban and Afghan security forces in the northeastern province of Nuristan.

A Taliban spokesman told Al Jazeera that 18 of their fighters have been killed in the past three days of intense fighting, and that the group has also captured a number of Afghan policemen.