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[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

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The New York Times

## 2 Are Killed in Sixth NATO Copter Crash Since Late April in Afghanistan

By RAY RIVERA

6/5/2011

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two [NATO](#) service members died Sunday when their helicopter crashed in eastern [Afghanistan](#). It was the latest in a string of crashes in recent weeks that were being investigated.

A NATO spokesman said the helicopter in the crash on Sunday went down in the Sabari District of Khost Province, a mountainous area near the Pakistan border where insurgents have been active this spring. The spokesman said two crew members were airlifted from the crash site, but he provided no other details, including the nationality of the two who were killed.

The Taliban quickly claimed responsibility for shooting down the aircraft, but NATO officials in Kabul said there had been no reports of hostile activity in the area.

“But what we don’t want to do is state categorically the reason for the crash, which is under investigation,” said Maj. Tim James, a British Army spokesman for the NATO-led military coalition.

At least six coalition helicopters have gone down since April 24, and five people have been killed. NATO has not announced the cause of any of the crashes, or whether the helicopters were

downed as a result of hostile action. Officials said it typically takes two months to investigate a crash, and they have declined to release any details before the investigations are complete.

In at least four of the crashes, NATO said there was no indication of enemy activity.

The crashes do not appear to show a pattern, either involving problems with the aircraft or a shift in enemy tactics, Major James said.

Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, said insurgents were planting roadside bombs on Sunday in the village of Noori when an American helicopter flew close overhead.

“This helicopter was flying at low altitude and wanted to target the mujahedeen,” Mr. Mujahid said by telephone from an undisclosed location. “But before it could shoot at the mujahedeen, it was shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade.”

On May 30, an Australian Chinook helicopter crashed in the town of Tarin Kowt in the southern province of Uruzgan, killing one service member and injuring five others. The Australian military said the crash was under investigation but ruled out enemy ground fire as a cause.

[An American soldier died May 26](#) when a helicopter crashed in Paktika Province in eastern Afghanistan, and another died in a crash on April 24 in Kapisa Province, also in eastern Afghanistan.

Coalition helicopters were also forced to make what NATO described as hard landings on May 15 in the Panjwayi District in Kandahar Province and again on May 29 in southern Afghanistan. No casualties were reported in either landing.

Hard landing is a term that NATO uses for crashes in which the pilot does not lose control of the craft during the descent. The difference in classification, officials say, can be a gray area.