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AP News

5 NATO troops, Afghan official die in Afghanistan

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Five international coalition troops died Tuesday and an Afghan district official, his son and a body guard were assassinated in southern Afghanistan where the Taliban are targeting people loyal to the government and its foreign partners.

Abdul Jabar Murghani, chief of Arghandab district, was driving home when a remote-controlled bomb exploded in a car parked along his route. Arghandab — the same area where a suicide bomber killed 56 people at a wedding party last week — is a dangerous area of Kandahar province.

Afghan and NATO forces are ramping up security in the province to drive the Taliban from their spiritual homeland and bolster the Afghan central government's control across the country where there has been an uptick in violence.

Authorities said Tuesday that 12 Afghan police officers and six civilians have died since early Monday in attacks across the nation. The civilians were killed in two attacks — one a remote-controlled explosive that killed four people in Helmand province in the south, and the second a roadside bomb that killed two others in western Herat province, the Interior Ministry said.

President Hamid Karzai condemned the assassination of the district chief.

"When Murghani arrived at the scene, the bomb was detonated," Karzai said in a statement. "The continuation of such terrorist attacks reflect a conspiracy of strangers and enemies of the Afghan people."

Nayamit Khan, an eyewitness at the scene, said the blast occurred around 5 p.m.

"The explosion was so big that the car carrying the district chief was moved from one side of the road to the other," he said. "There was a lot of smoke."

Both NATO troops and Afghan security forces have been suffering heavier casualties in recent weeks. Including the latest deaths, 44 international service members have been killed so far this month, 27 of them American, nine British.

Three of the latest NATO deaths were British soldiers — two shot dead Tuesday in separate incidents in southern Helmand province. The third died in a British hospital from injuries sustained in a firefight Sunday in Helmand, according to the British government.

A U.S. service member was killed Tuesday in a gunbattle in eastern Afghanistan, said Col. Wayne Shanks, a spokesman for U.S. forces.

A Polish soldier was killed and two were injured Tuesday in a missile attack on a base in eastern Afghanistan, the Polish military said. Pfc. Grzegorz Bukowski, 29, was fatally injured by shrapnel from the missile, said Piotr Jaszczuk, a Polish military spokesman. The wounded soldiers were hospitalized but did not have life-threatening injuries.

Poland has lost 18 soldiers in Afghanistan, where it currently has some 2,600 troops. Prime Minister Donald Tusk has said he wants to end the Polish mission here, and will ask NATO to work out a pullout timetable.

The police deaths occurred in a number of incidents in the east and south.

Militants attacked a police checkpoint in eastern Ghazni province before dawn Tuesday, killing five officers and wounding one, said Ghazni Deputy Police Chief Nawroz Ali Nawroz. He said the attackers overran the checkpoint north of Ghazni city and made off with weapons.

On Monday, militants attacked Afghan and NATO forces outside of Jalalabad city in the east. The resulting firefight left two police officers and five attackers dead, the Interior Ministry said.

Roadside bombs killed four police officers in Wardak province and one in Kandahar province, the ministry said.