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<u>The Washington Post</u>

Rogue Afghan soldier kills 2 French troops

By Ernesto Londoño

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KABUL — A man wearing an Afghan army uniform fatally shot two French service members in eastern Afghanistan on Thursday, military officials said. It was the latest in a string of similar attacks that the Taliban claims to have masterminded.

Hours later, a roadside bomb killed 10 Afghan police officers in southern Helmand province, an attack that authorities said was among the deadliest against Afghan security forces this year.

"It was the work of the enemies, the Taliban, who have suffered a defeat in face-to-face fighting and resort to planting mines like these," said Dawood Ahmadi, a spokesman for Helmand's governor.

The two attacks marred what has been a relatively quiet winter, a season during which violence in Afghanistan tends to ebb because the snow and cold temperatures limit mobility.

Still, sporadic attacks have continued, including a suicide bombing outside a funeral in northern Afghanistan on Sunday that killed 20 people, among them a member of parliament.

The Taliban asserted responsibility for the shooting of the French troops in a statement that said a rogue soldier named Ibrahim had joined the "puppet army" for a "specific purpose." The statement said Ibrahim shot the troops on a base in Kapisa province, which is directly northeast of Kabul province.

"He was shot and martyred by the invaders in exchange of fire," the statement said.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy learned of the deaths of the two French Foreign Legion members with "great sadness," according to a message that his office posted on Twitter.

The French government said the troops were stationed in Tagab valley.