

Suicide attack at Afghan police HQ kills 12

In a statement e-mailed to the media, the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attacks in the eastern Paktika province

- AP
- Published: 15:57 November 27, 2010

Kabul: Two suicide bombers wearing police uniforms blew themselves up at an Afghan police headquarters Saturday, killing at least 12 officers in a deadly border region that has long been a refuge for Islamist extremists from around the world, officials said.

In a statement e-mailed to the media, the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attacks in the eastern Paktika province.

Nawab Waziry, the head of Paktika's provincial council, said both men wore police uniforms and made it through three security gates before reaching the main building on the police compound. One attacker detonated his explosives inside the police headquarters building, while the other blew himself up near the entrance, he said. The blasts went off within 20 minutes of each other.

"There are lots of casualties," Waziry told The Associated Press. "The site was covered with blood."

Gen. Daud Andarabi, the spokesman for the regional police commander in southeastern Afghanistan, said the blasts killed at least 12 officers and wounded 16. Meyawer Khan, chief of the criminal investigation department for Paktika province, confirmed 12 people were killed.

The attack took place in one of the most violent areas of Afghanistan, where NATO and Afghan forces fight daily against the Haqqani network, a Pakistan-based Taliban faction closely tied to al-Qaida. The area, about 92 miles (150 kilometers) south of Kabul, borders the Pakistani region of North Waziristan and has been the target of numerous drone strikes against the Taliban, al-Qaida and the forces of the Haqqani network.

Although NATO forces have poured troops into the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand and have been making progress in rolling back the Taliban, much fighting has shifted to the eastern provinces where the Haqqani network holds sway. But there also have been outbreaks in other provinces - Baghdis in the northwest, Kunduz and Baghlan and Takhar in the north. A bombing in a packed mosque last month killed Kunduz's governor and 19 others.

Elsewhere, Afghan and coalition forces killed at least 15 insurgents during an overnight search for a senior Taliban leader in remote eastern Afghanistan, NATO said Saturday.

Security forces came under attack near a compound in Sherzad district of Nangarhar province on Friday night, sparking a battle that killed the insurgents. NATO also used airstrikes in the operation. The alliance said insurgents were the only casualties.

Authorities were trying to determine whether the Taliban leader the troops were searching for was among those killed. The leader was not identified, but NATO said he helped foreign fighters, raised money and planned attacks against Afghan and coalition forces.

Also Saturday, NATO said Afghan and coalition forces called in an airstrike to destroy a network of tunnels and underground bunkers in a Taliban-occupied area of Musa Qala district in Helmand province.

In Kandahar province on Friday, three Afghan civilians - believed to be ages 10, 15 and 20 - were killed in a roadside bomb in Zhari district, NATO said.

In the northern province of Takhar, 16 family members who were heading to a funeral died Friday when their driver lost control of their vehicle, said Faiz Mohammad Tawhedi, spokesman for the provincial governor.

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