

Beat: Politics

Suicide bomber on donkey kills 8, including 3 Americans, in Afghanistan

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USPA News - Three American service members were among eight people killed on Tuesday when a suicide bomber riding a donkey attacked Afghan and coalition forces in eastern Afghanistan, U.S. and Afghan officials said on Wednesday. It raises the number of foreign troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year to 105. The attack happened on early Tuesday when a man on a donkey detonated his explosives near a convoy of Afghan and coalition troops in the Saydabad district of eastern Wardak province.

The blast killed at least eight people, including three American service members with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), four Afghan soldiers and one Afghan translator. ISAF confirmed three of its service members were killed as a result of an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in Afghanistan's east, but declined to provide additional details about the circumstances of the attack or the nationalities of the casualties. The total number of injured was also unclear but includes three American service members. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for Tuesday's attack, which he said was carried out by a man from Kabul province. "A heroic Mujahid (Muslim fighter) of the Islamic Emirate (Taliban) conducted a martyr attack on the U.S. military convoy [which was] halted in an area of Saydabad district [of] Wardak province and was about to go on an operation." Mujahid, whose claims could not be independently verified, added: "A number of the enemy personnel carriers and armored fighting vehicles got destroyed in the huge explosion. Witnesses saw the ambulance helicopters making six trips to evacuate the dead and wounded." Tuesday's deaths raise the number of coalition troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year to 105, according to official figures. A total of 402 ISAF troops were killed in Afghanistan in 2012, down from 566 fatalities in 2011 and 711 in 2010. A majority of the fallen troops were American and were killed in the country's south, which is plagued by IED attacks on troops and civilians. There are currently more than 100,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan, including some 68,000 U.S. troops and 9,000 British soldiers. Approximately 3,800 British soldiers are expected to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2013, with all foreign combat troops due to leave by the end of 2014. Last month, Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced the fifth and final phase of security transition in which coalition forces hand over control of the remaining 95 districts - including Taliban stronghold areas in the south and east - to Afghan security forces. ISAF will still be responsible for military air support as well as support in combat operations until the end of 2014.

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