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AFP News Briefs List

Suicide bomber kills three in Iraq by Ali al-Tuwaijri

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A suicide bomber disguised as an Iraqi policeman killed three officers and wounded eight US soldiers and a civilian on Monday, in the third such attack on security forces in just over a week. The bomber targeted a joint Iraqi and American foot patrol in Baquba northeast of Baghdad, military officials told AFP, replicating two recent incidents in which suicide assassins also wore security forces uniform.

"The suicide bomber took advantage of police and he managed to reach them and blow himself up," Baquba's deputy mayor Raad al-Dahalaki told AFP. "He looked the same as them."

An Iraqi official from the city's military operations command said three policeman had been killed and one civilian wounded in the attack which happened near the mayor's office. Neither Dahalaki nor the mayor were wounded.

Baquba is in the ethnically and religiously mixed Diyala province, considered one of the most dangerous areas in the country, where Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgent groups still launch regular attacks.

An American military spokesman said initial reports indicated that "eight US coalition soldiers were wounded," but none had been killed. He did not confirm that three police had been killed and one civilian wounded.

The attack in Baquba, 60 kilometres (35 miles) northeast of Baghdad, came four days after a suicide bomber in security forces uniform blew himself up inside a heavily guarded military compound west of the capital.

There were widely varying accounts of the toll of that incident, with the defence ministry saying 38 soldiers were wounded. However, senior defence and interior ministry officials said 16 had been killed and another 50 injured.

A suicide bomber disguised in military uniform also struck inside the compound of a US-allied militia south of Baghdad on April 11, killing nine people and wounding dozens.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki warned on Sunday at a meeting of senior security officials that the danger from "terrorist cells" was far from over.

His remarks followed an upsurge in violence over recent weeks after several months in which there was a steady reduction in the number of attacks.

"We have succeeded in re-establishing security, but maintaining it is more difficult," Maliki told the meeting of senior police officers.

Also on Monday, two girls under the age of 12 were killed when a sticky bomb targeting an army officer exploded in Fallujah west of Baghdad, as he left for work, police said.

The bomb meant for Captain Saadun Mohammed Ali went off near the door of his house when he was already in his car, police Colonel Daud Maraawi told AFP. The blast killed Ali's daughter and niece as they waved goodbye to him.

Iraq's 560,000 police and 260,000 soldiers are to assume greater responsibility for security as US forces withdraw from all cities by June 30 and from the country as a whole by the end of 2011.

Violence has plummeted over the past two years as American and Iraqi forces have allied with local tribes and former insurgents to bring calm to vast swathes of the country, but attacks remain common in some areas.

More than 80 people have been killed since the start of April, according to an AFP count based on reports from security officials.

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Iraqi police officers stand in attention at their headquarters in the town of Haditha, April 19. A suicide bomber disguised as an Iraqi policeman killed three officers and wounded eight US soldiers and a civilian, in the third such attack on security forces in just over a week.

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An Iraqi officer walks past the scene of a suicide bombing in Baquba. A suicide bomber disguised as an Iraqi policeman killed three officers and wounded eight US soldiers and a civilian, in the third such attack on security forces in just over a week.

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