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21 Afghan Police Die In Taliban Assault

Suicide Blast Is 2nd Major Strike In Past 2 Days

By Candace Rondeaux
Washington Post Foreign Service
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ISLAMABAD, [Pakistan](#), Feb. 2 -- At least 21 Afghan police officers were killed Monday in southern [Afghanistan](#) when a Taliban suicide bomber disguised as a policeman attacked a local police station, according to Afghan government officials.

The bombing occurred about 11:30 a.m. in the town of Tarin Kot in the southern province of Uruzgan. The bomber walked into a district police station and detonated a vest full of explosives, apparently concealed beneath a stolen police uniform, said Hashim Watanwal, an Afghan parliament member in the province.

Watanwal said at least 21 police officers were killed instantly and eight others were injured. Seven of the wounded men were listed in critical condition Monday afternoon.

A spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry confirmed that the bomber was wearing a police uniform when the attack occurred and said that an investigation into the incident is underway.

The attack in Tarin Kot on Monday marked the second major Taliban suicide attack in as many days on security forces in Afghanistan. On Sunday, a suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle packed with explosives into a military convoy near the outskirts of the Afghan capital of Kabul, injuring three, including a French soldier.

Suicide bombings in and around the capital have increased in recent months with the deterioration of security in the neighboring provinces of Wardak and Logar, where insurgents have established a strong foothold.

More than 1,000 Afghan police officers have been killed since January 2007, according to Afghan government and U.S. military data. Several Afghan officers have been killed recently in "friendly fire" incidents in which Western troops have mistakenly fired on police contingents during operations.

In December, six Afghan police officers were killed and 13 wounded after U.S. troops opened fire on them during a late-night operation near the town of Qalat in eastern Zabol province.

The United States has spent about \$6.2 billion on training and equipment for Afghan police since the U.S.-led military mission in Afghanistan began seven years ago.

The investment has produced mixed results. A fraction of police officers trained by U.S. forces have achieved full readiness to operate independently.

About 730 U.S. military advisers have been dispatched to the country to train the Afghan police. But

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