Beat: Miscellaneous

Truck bombing kills 7 Georgian soldiers in Afghanistan

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USPA News - Seven Georgian troops were killed Thursday and nine others were wounded when a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden truck outside a military base in southern Afghanistan, military officials said on Friday. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

The attack happened at around 4 p.m. local time on Thursday when a truck loaded with explosives blew up outside a Georgian military base in the Nawzad District of Helmand province, which is located in Afghanistan`s volatile southern region that was the birthplace of the Taliban movement two decades ago. Officials at the Georgian Ministry of Defense confirmed seven of its service members were killed while nine others were injured. The casualties, all between the ages of 21 and 29, were from the 42nd Light Infantry Battalion of the IV Infantry Brigade and had been serving in the war-torn country since April. "The Defense Ministry expresses deepest condolences to the families of our hero soldiers. This is a huge loss for their families as well for entire Georgia," said Colonel Lasha Beridze, Chief of Joint Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces. "The Georgian Government, Defense Ministry and Georgian Armed Forces honorably deliver assistance to the families of fallen heroes, to the wounded soldiers and their families." The fatalities were identified as 25-year-old Corporal Teimuraz Ortavidze, 23-year-old Corporal Giorgi Adamov, 22-year-old 1st Class Private Zurab Gurgenashvili, 26-year-old Private Mikheil Narindoshvili, 29-year-old Corporal Boris Tsugoshvili, 22-year-old 1st Class Private Zviad Sulkhanishvili, and 21-year-old 1st Class Private Giorgi Ghuchashvili. Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania ended early his official visit to the Belgian capital of Brussels to travel to Afghanistan on Friday and meet with the wounded service members as well as Afghan Defense Minister Bismillah Khan Mohammadi. Alasania was joined by Major General Walter Miller, the Commanding General of ISAF`s Regional Command Southwest. At the Central Military Hospital at Camp Bastion, Alasania spoke with doctors about the soldiers` health conditions and spoke with the victims personally to wish them a fast recovery. According to military doctor Major Zurab Zakaraia, the soldiers do not have life-threatening injuries. The Caucasus country has more than 1,500 troops serving in Helmand province, making Georgia the largest non-NATO contributor to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The deaths on Thursday raise the number of Georgian troops killed in Afghanistan so far to 30, coming less than a month after a suicide bomber killed three Georgian soldiers in a similar attack. ISAF Commander General Joseph Dunford extended his condolences to the families of the casualties and those who served with them. "Their memories remain in our hearts and we will never forget their service and sacrifice," he said. "While this is a sad moment for the Georgian people and the coalition forces, we will not be deterred from our efforts to bring stability and security to the Afghan people." Dunford added that the alliance "will always be grateful" for Georgia`s contribution and commitment to the mission in Afghanistan. "Georgia`s support of the ISAF mission has been steadfast and tangible," he said. "While many have contributed to the security improvements in Afghanistan, Georgian soldiers have always stood out for their toughness and willingness to take on difficult missions." Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi claimed responsibility for Thursday`s attack, but it was not possible to independently verify the claim as the insurgent group is known to frequently make false claims of responsibility. He said the attack was carried out by a Taliban fighter identified as Abdul Ghafar from Kandahar province. The latest death raises the number of coalition troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year to 81, 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.

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