

8 NATO troops die in three Afghan attacks

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USPA News - Eight coalition service members were killed Saturday in three separate attacks across Afghanistan, less than a week after the Taliban announced the start of their so-called spring offensive, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said. The deadliest attack happened on Saturday morning in the Maiwand district of Kandahar province, located in Afghanistan's volatile south, when a roadside bomb struck a vehicle carrying a number of American troops.

The multinational force confirmed five of its service members, all of them American, were killed in the blast. Two more coalition service members were killed in western Farah province when an Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier opened fire at foreign troops. ISAF would not disclose the nationality of those killed, but a U.S. official in Washington confirmed both casualties were American. Provincial police said the gunman was killed when American troops returned fire. Another coalition service member died in an insurgent attack in northern Afghanistan on late Saturday, but the exact location of the attack or his nationality was not immediately known. Details about the circumstances of the attack were also not immediately disclosed, but ISAF typically refers to small-arms attacks as insurgent attacks. The attacks made Saturday the bloodiest day so far this year for foreign troops in Afghanistan. It comes less than a week after the Taliban insurgent group, which claimed responsibility for Saturday's attacks, announced the beginning of its so-called spring offensive against coalition forces. A statement from the Leadership Council of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the official name of the Taliban, said this year's spring offensive will be called "Khalid bin Waleed," a reference to a famous Arab general of the Muslim army during the Muslim conquests of the 7th century. "The Afghan Mujahid nation, in defense of their religion and country, has occupied the trenches of Jihad and resistance for the past eleven years against the invading crusaders and their spineless backers," the council said in a statement on April 27. "During this lengthy period, with the Grace of Allah Almighty, the Jihadi determination and patience has only increased in perseverance by the day and, with the divine help of Allah Almighty, has handed the world a memorable defeat in every field." The insurgent group said the offensive would begin across the country on April 28 and aims to defeat the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The Taliban each year announces spring offensives against coalition forces, with an offensive called "al-Farooq" in 2012 and "Badar" in 2011. "This year's spring operation, in accordance with its combat nature, will consist of special military tactics quantity and quality wise while successful insider attacks, to eliminate foreign invaders, will be carried out by infiltrating Mujahideen (Taliban fighters) inside enemy bases in a systematic and coordinated manner," the council said. The statement added: "Similarly, collective martyrdom operations on bases of foreign invaders, their diplomatic centers and military airbases will be even further structured while every possible tactic will be utilized in order to detain or inflict heavy casualties on the foreign transgressors." The insurgent group further called on Afghan civilians to stay away from military bases or areas frequented by foreign troops to avoid civilian casualties. It also called on Afghan officials to abandon the government of President Hamid Karzai to "conform to Islamic commands, national interests and protection of yourselves." The latest deaths raise the number of coalition troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year to 51, 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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