



RAPID
Realtime Analysis and Publishing of IED Data

Weekly News Update

Volume 1, Issue 3

20 JULY 2011

The RAPID Weekly News Update is a weekly collection of unclassified news coverage focused on noteworthy improvised explosive attacks and trends in the IED/C-IED community. For additional information or to be added to the RAPID network, please email the RAPID team (rapid@atsolutions.com) from your government email account.



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1. Troops Get Blast Protection Underwear (British Forces News)

Thursday, 14 July 2011

<http://bfbs.com/news/afghanistan/troops-get-blast-protection-underwear-42310.html>

The Ministry of Defence has announced that British troops are to get pelvic protection to protect them from roadside bombs.

The special anti-blast underwear consists of a three layered system of clothing and armour, which also includes special armoured trousers.

Nearly 350 British troops have been killed in Afghanistan and many more have been injured, often by IED blasts.

The £10 million system was designed to integrate with the current kit issued to soldiers on the front line. 45,000 pairs of the underwear have already been delivered to troops on operations, with another 15,000 to be issued to deploying troops.

Colonel Peter Rafferty, personal combat equipment team leader at Defence Equipment and Support, said: "Our troops in Afghanistan face specific threats and by working together, the MoD and industry have created a layered system of clothing and body armour that offers troops fighting on the frontline the best balance between protection, mobility and comfort."

"Troops on operations already have world renowned body armour but we continually seek to improve the personal protection available to them."

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2. Afghan Deaths Up 15% This Year, U.N. Report Says (Los Angeles Times)

Friday, 15 July 2011

<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jul/15/world/la-fg-afghan-civilians-20110715>

The Afghan war claimed 15% more civilian lives in the first half of this year than in the same period a year ago, the United Nations said in a report Thursday that painted a picture of deteriorating safety across the country.

The grim figures contrast with the relatively upbeat security assessments presented recently by senior U.S. military officials as an American troop drawdown gets underway.

The U.N. said it had documented 1,462 civilian deaths from January to June, four-fifths of them caused by insurgents. The report singles out the "dramatic growth" in the use of so-called improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, whose pressure plates can be tripped even by the weight of a child.

"Afghan children, women and men continue to be killed and injured at an alarming rate," said Staffan de Mistura, head of the U.N. mission in Afghanistan.

Violence has soared in the last two months with the advent of the "fighting season," which arrives with warmer weather.

The number of security incidents hit an all-time high in June, including the largest number of IED attacks recorded in a single month, the report says. May saw 368 civilian deaths, the largest number since the U.N. began tracking noncombatant fatalities five years ago. June had nearly as many, with 360.

Although Western troops are responsible for a much smaller share of civilian deaths than are insurgents, public anger over these fatalities tends to be more pronounced. Fourteen percent of the deaths were blamed on the NATO force and its Afghan allies, and responsibility for the remainder could not be determined.

Civilian casualties have been a major point of friction between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the Western militaries, and a new dispute erupted Thursday in Khowst province, on the border with Pakistan. Provincial spokesman Mobariz Zadran said six civilians, including an 11-year-old girl, were killed in a NATO-led night raid, sparking an angry demonstration in the province's capital.

Protesters chanting anti-U.S. slogans carried the bodies through the streets of Khowst city. The NATO force said the incident was being investigated.

Over the last year, Western commanders have been increasingly reliant on air power, and the new civilian casualty figures reflect that. The report says airstrikes were the leading cause of civilian deaths attributed to the NATO force, with strikes from helicopters in particular taking an increasing toll.

Earlier this year, after U.S. helicopter gunners mistakenly killed nine young boys gathering firewood on a hillside in eastern Afghanistan, Gen. David H. Petraeus ordered a training review for helicopter crews and those who direct and deploy them.

Even in parts of the country where the U.S. military has cited significant progress, including Kandahar and Helmand provinces, civilians feel trapped between the warring parties. At a news conference in Kabul, the capital, Georgette Gagnon, director of human rights for the U.N. mission, read out a commentary from a resident of Marja, the scene of a major U.S. Marine-led offensive 17 months ago.

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"The Taliban come to any house they please, by force," the resident told the U.N. researchers. "Then they fire from the house, and then [Western and Afghan troops] fire at the house. But if I tell the Taliban not to enter, the Taliban will kill me."

"So what is the answer?" he asked. "People cannot live like this."

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3. Operation Eliminate IEDs (The Canberra Times)

Saturday, 16 July 2011

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/opinion/editorial/general/operation-eliminate-icds/2228552.aspx?storypage=0>

Brigadier Wayne Budd hates improvised explosive devices with a passion.

His ambition is to identify and eliminate the bomb-makers and to make their weapons, which have accounted for almost half of all Australian combat deaths in Afghanistan since 2002, redundant.

The Commander of the Australian Defence Force's Counter IED taskforce, he comes across as the right man in the right job at the right time.

Budd's ambition is to lift the current identification and recovery rate of IEDs from 60 per cent to as close to 100 per cent as possible.

"If we could lift the detection rate to, say, 98per cent we could eradicate the relevance of the IED on the battlefield," he said. "That would be my nirvana."

To that end he is calling on the full spectrum of Australian industry to consider how detection techniques could be improved.

He cites the mining and medical sectors, both of which rely on sophisticated scanning technologies, as areas from which future breakthroughs may come.

"An IED is an anomaly against its background," he said. "Do they [the miners and the medical technicians] have technology we can use?"

Budd, a Duntroon graduate and a 33-year veteran of the army, was the commander of the national command element in Kabul for 10months from from mid-2009 to mid-2010.

A qualified civil engineer, he heads a close-knit team of fewer than 30 service personnel and scientists and public servants from Defence and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation.

The taskforce uses crime scene investigation-style technologies, relying on some of the most sophisticated criminological laboratories around the world to identify and track the work of the Taliban's best bomb-makers.

The bad ones are easy to find.

"They blow themselves up," he said. "It [making IEDs] is a very Darwinian process."

Tracking down the rest relies on recovering intact roadside bombs and the remnants of exploded devices and subjecting them to sophisticated forensic analysis.

Finding the bombs is a combination of training, observation, intuition and luck.

"Our guys learn to look for clues; places where the terrain channels you over a particular piece of ground for example," Budd said. "We also learn to look for the insurgents' markers, things they may do to let the locals know to avoid a particular spot."

This can be as simple as a stone or a stick in the centre of the path.

"One of the best tools against the IED is a very well trained and prepared sapper and his eyes," Budd said. "Explosive detection dogs are another. They are fantastic, we couldn't get enough of them when I was over there [in Afghanistan]. We have yet to replicate a dog's nose."

On the downside, five Australian bomb-sniffing dogs have been killed to date. They, and their handlers, were remembered at a memorial unveiled at Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, on July 5.

One of the dogs, a three-year-old border collie husky cross called Herbie, was killed with his handler, Sapper Darren Smith, on June 7, 2010. Herbie's ashes were returned to Sapper Smith's widow, Angela, later that month.

The other four dogs were Merlin the first explosive detection dog to be killed in Afghanistan Razz, Andy and Nova.

The dogs, which are trained to locate explosives and then alert their handlers, have a success rate of more than 98 per cent. They are regarded as the only reliable way to clear an area of explosives in a short space of time.

Budd said the IED battlespace was far from static, with his bomb hunters well aware they were working directly under the eyes of an enemy who would like nothing better than to see them blown up.

"The insurgents watch us like hawks," he said. "They will plant an IED [just] to watch our drills and then use that information about our response to plan future attacks."

A constant battle of wits, the anti-IED campaign is an ever-evolving process.

"The insurgents are [now] using remote-controlled arming devices, this means they don't have to place markers or tell-tales."

Budd warned it was dangerous to underestimate an enemy who, like their predecessors in many other conflicts, knew how to harness simple technologies with deadly force.

"The Afghan devices are not as sophisticated as the ones we encountered in Iraq," he said. "But they are just as deadly."

"While our enemy is not technologically developed they are tactically sophisticated. They ruthlessly exploit patterns, routines and vulnerabilities."

The IEDs are devastatingly simple with a wide range of designs downloadable from the internet. Their builders have moved on from constructing devices with metal parts, such as car springs for triggers and old artillery shells as the explosive force, to "stealth versions" made of wood and plastic and designed to evade mine detectors.

Budd said the most frequently used component in the home-made explosives was ammonium nitrate, a fertiliser. While the substance had been banned in Afghanistan since the early part of the conflict, it took the Karzai Government until 2009 to make the prohibition reasonably effective.

The substance is still being smuggled in large quantities, often by groups linked to exporting opium for the drug trade.

Narcotics play a significant role in funding the insurgency's operations.

YPOCs, the military acronym for "yellow palm oil containers", are the explosives package of choice. With palm oil almost universally used across Afghanistan for cooking, the discarded 25lt containers are everywhere. When filled with home-made explosive they can be carried by a single person, Budd said.

This simple human factor determines the "average charge" used in the bulk of IEDs.

Because each bomb is hand-made, usually in somebody's shed and using what is laying around, it is unique.

What Budd's team looks for in identifying a bomb-maker are recurrent similarities in designs and manufacturing techniques. This can be something as simple as how the detonator is wired or the trigger is set.

And, because the devices are the products of home workshops and not glistening factories, they often carry mementoes of their makers, what the criminologists call "biometric evidence". This can range from finger prints to DNA samples such as hair, skin fragments or, if somebody has been clumsy and cut themselves, even blood.

In the case of an exploded device, the evidence is collected by trained weapons intelligence teams who look for anything that might have been a part of the bomb.

Operatives also look at the consequences of the explosion in order to determine how powerful it was and if there was anything unusual about it. "Have there been more casualties than you would have expected? If so you ask why," Budd said.

The task is much simpler in the case of unexploded IEDs. "This gives us a chance to get inside the mind of the insurgent," Budd said.

"We can understand how a bomb-maker has been trained and may even be able to identify a particular teacher and his area of influence."

Budd said that while he could not for operational reasons reveal the level of information that could be extracted by reverse engineering an IED or how the process was carried out, the results were "remarkable".

"We are able to build a picture of networks, organisational structures, training regimes and even the individuals themselves."

Biometric evidence such as fingerprints and DNA goes into a shared database. This pool of knowledge can reveal connections between a range of incidents conducted over significant lengths of time.

"You can suddenly have a situation where arrests can be made," Budd said.

Experience in Iraq and elsewhere has shown that as the size of database grows, its effectiveness increases almost exponentially.

The existence of the database has made it harder for insurgents to infiltrate Afghan security forces as all recruits have to undergo biometric testing. Infiltrators run the risk of being linked to previous insurgent activity.

Budd said that the already relatively high detection rate of IEDs was both a product of, and a boon to, his team's work.

Visible results, such as the capture of an insurgent bomb-maker and several of his associates by members of Australia's Special Operations Task Group and their Afghan National Army partners in the Mirabad Valley in Uruzgan province on July 2, are "very rewarding".

"Bomb-makers are high-value targets; as are key figures in the [munitions] supply chain," Budd said. The capture of the bomb-maker, described by Defence as a senior district level insurgent commander, would have two immediate effects. "It stops this individual from making bombs," Budd said. "It also means he won't be training other bomb-makers."

The insurgent commander, the 23rd to have been taken in Uruzgan since March this year, is now in detention awaiting trial. Defence had been tracking him and his accomplices for "several months".

He, and others like him, have been responsible for killing and maiming dozens of Australian soldiers since the war began.

The number of Afghan civilians who have been killed by IEDs placed by insurgents is much higher. This week, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon criticised the Taliban over a report that revealed at least 1169 civilians had been killed by insurgents to the end of June. Of these more than 400 were the victims of IEDs.

Civilian deaths caused by the insurgency are up 28per cent on the same period last year.

A WikiLeaks document, reported in Britain's Guardian newspaper in July last year, claimed that for every Coalition soldier killed by an IED, three civilians are killed and a further six are injured. Of the 17 Australian soldiers wounded in Afghanistan this year six, or almost a third, were victims of IEDs. Of the 28 Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan since February 16, 2002, 12 were victims of IEDs. A 13th was killed by a mine. As recently as May 25, two Australian soldiers were injured when their Bushmaster protected mobility vehicle sustained major damage from an IED strike in Southern Afghanistan.

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Budd said the Bushmaster was one of the first lines of defence in the battle against the home-made bombs and did a great job. "We are winning the IED fight," he said. "The Bushmaster is part of what we call 'defeating the device'. I am very happy with their battlefield performance."

The safety of Australian troops is to receive a further boost in the immediate future with the belated arrival of a replacement for the Special Air Services Regiment's Land Rover-based long-range patrol vehicles. A modified version of the Supacat Jackals used by the British in Afghanistan since 2008, the Australian vehicle is called the Nary in honour of SAS Warrant Officer David Nary who was killed in 2005. Defence has bought 31 Narys for \$50 million, or about \$1.6million each, from the Devon-based manufacturer in Britain. This is almost three times the cost of an Australian-built Bushmaster which ranges from \$563,000 to \$590,000.

The Narys can be fitted with armour upgrades to protect against IEDs and bullets and come with two machine guns and a grenade launcher.

A 130km/h top speed is made possible by a massive Cummins diesel engine. On the downside, the all-up weight of 10t, which includes a tonne of armour, means the vehicles have to be slung underneath RAAF Chinook helicopters, not carried inside them. They were due to go into service almost two years ago but have been dogged by technical problems.

On June 6 Sapper Rowan Robinson was killed during a special forces operation that located and destroyed a major Taliban weapons cache. Included in the haul were 60 electronic detonators, five pressure plates, 500m of detonation cord and numerous remote-control devices. The cache was just part of a successful season for the Special Operations Task Group which, in conjunction with Afghan forces and members of the Mentoring Task Force, has captured enough material to make 150 of the improvised bombs in the past six months.

A former Special Operations Task Group commander said this success had been reflected in a lower than expected deployment of IEDs by the insurgents since the start of the current fighting season.

The simplicity of many of the components used by the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters was the principal reason IEDs had become the weapon of choice for insurgencies around the globe, Budd said. The current research into IEDs and how to defeat them would remain relevant long after Australia withdrew from Afghanistan.

"Conventional conflicts are morphing more and more frequently into terror campaigns, and that is where the IED comes in," Budd said.

"Libya is a recent example with reports Government forces have used IEDs against the opposition.

"There is a recognition of the impact of the IED as a terror weapon that can drive a media reaction, a population reaction and a government reaction.

"The military forces of the world need to anticipate that the IED will be a weapon on all future battlefields."

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4. Militants Ship Bomb Materials In NATO Trucks (Military.com)

Tuesday, 19 July 2011

<http://www.military.com/news/article/militants-ship-bomb-materials-in-nato-trucks.html>

While coalition forces in Afghanistan wage a battle against improvised explosive devices, a Military.com investigation has revealed Pakistani officials are turning a blind eye toward smugglers who deal in the main ingredient used to make the deadly weapons.

More disturbing is that along with Taliban smugglers using secret routes much of the supply has been carried across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in trucks contracted by NATO, which allows them to cross between the two countries unhindered.

Improvised explosive devices have accounted for 66 percent of the overall casualties in Afghanistan since the war started in 2001. The makeshift bombs have claimed 368 troops in 2010; this year the tally has already reached 143.

The main chemical insurgents use to make their deadly bombs is ammonium nitrate, which is being funneled into the country from Karachi, Pakistan's main financial hub.

Karachi's ethnic rioting, political instability, and sectarianism – along with the fact that in the last four years over 5,000 people have been killed in politically-motivated violence – have earned Karachi the dubious reputation of being the world's most dangerous city. Once the center of al Qaeda's operational headquarters, the city remains a Taliban stronghold.

In Karachi's chemical markets ammonium nitrate is produced by fertilizer companies for agricultural work. While the chemical is on the Pakistani customs controlled items list it is widely available in open markets.

"We could deliver you big quantities of the item at a right price," said Ahmed Jan, a local smuggler -- and one of the few willing to speak on the record. "For a higher price we could deliver you the items in Afghanistan."

Jan claimed insurgents have been using what are known as "Afghan transit trade" containers and NATO and ISAF sub-contractors and paying upwards of \$3,000 a kilo – a unit fee that rivals a worker's annual income.

"That's an offer a truck driver cannot refuse," Jan said.

The Afghan government has recently attempted to ban the import of ammonium nitrate. In 2010, in an effort to stem the flow of this material, the Afghan government prohibited the use of ammonium nitrate as a fertilizer. But this effort and attempted vigilance by Afghan National Security Forces have fallen short. IED incidents and casualties continue to mount.

The American government is aware of this activity and has repeatedly pressured the Pakistani government to crack down on the smuggling of the deadly chemical. A recent report published by the Senate Armed Services Committee confirms the fact that most of the ammonium nitrate used by insurgents to make IEDs flows into

Afghanistan from factories in Pakistan.

But while the United States is one of Pakistan's biggest donors – with billions of dollars in direct aid and another nearly \$9 billion in the form of the Coalition Support Fund used to assist the Pakistani army as it fights in the country's tribal region – Pakistan has never adopted serious measures to support NATO and ISAF forces across the border. Additionally Pakistan has not acted against militants who attack ISAF troops in Afghanistan and slip back into the semi-autonomous areas of Pakistan.

The IED problem isn't limited to the Afghanistan side of the border. According to stats compiled by the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization there have been over 10,000 IED incidents in Pakistan since 2003. JIEDDO has repeatedly asked Pakistan to increase control over the manufacture and distribution of ammonium nitrate and has initiated a public education campaign on the dangers posed by the deadly fertilizer.

“We are working closely with the U.S. government to stop this particular fertilizer as it is also hurting Pakistanis,” a spokesman for the country's interior ministry told Military.com. But in spite of this statement the persistent rate of IED attacks in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan has shown that the Pakistani government has limited ability to control the flow of goods and insurgents across the border.

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5. Countering IED Threat Vital To Afghan Stability, Saving Lives (DVIDS News)

Wednesday, 13 July 2011

<http://www.dvidshub.net/news/73666/countering-ied-threat-vital-afghan-stability-saving-lives#.TiWu9WF2HNs>

German Brig. Gen. Carsten Jacobson, International Security Assistance Force spokesperson, responds to a question following his opening remarks about countering the improvised explosive device threat in Afghanistan during a July 13, 2011, joint press conference at the Government Media and Information Center in Kabul. Major Gen. Mohammad Azimi, spokesperson for the Afghan Ministry of Defense, also spoke at the conference. Improvised explosive devices remain the No. 1 killer of Afghan civilians, Afghan National Security Forces and NATO troops in Afghanistan with 60 percent of all civilian casualties caused by IEDs.

Improvised explosive devices remain the No. 1 killer of Afghan civilians, Afghan national security forces and NATO troops in Afghanistan July 13 with 60 percent of all civilian casualties caused by IEDs.

The ANSF and International Security Assistance Force have a focused mission to counter this threat before and even after they are emplaced.

“The number of IEDs found and cleared or exploded increased nearly 11 percent in the past three months compared to the previous three months, and is up more than 20 percent for this same period in 2010,” said German Brig. Gen. Carsten Jacobson, ISAF spokesperson. “However, 56 percent of the IEDs were found prior to exploding in the last three months, a 5 percent increase for this same period last year.”

As the importance of reducing and minimizing the number of casualties caused by IEDs is crucial to the stability and livelihood of the people and government of Afghanistan, the ISAF continues to partner with the ANSF to find and eliminate these deadly bombs.

“Eliminating militant IED operations is a key focus of the ANSF and the coalition,” said Jacobson during a joint press conference with Maj. Gen. Mohammad Azimi, spokesperson for the Afghan Ministry of Defence, at the Government Media and Information Center in Kabul July 13. “We are attacking this in three primary ways: by attacking the insurgent IED network, by finding and implementing new ways to defeat the device, and lastly by growing and training the counter-IED force.”

Attacking the network reduces IED effects and interrupts the enemy’s IED activities by identifying and exploiting vulnerabilities and enabling offensive operations to disrupt all parts of the network, including the financiers, smugglers, planners, builders and lower-level insurgents who emplace the device or carry out an attack.

“In the last 11 months, nearly \$800,000 was paid out to Afghan civilians who provided about 700 tips on IEDs and weapons caches to the coalition or ANSF,” said Jacobson in talking about the success of the U.S. military’s rewards program which provides individuals with cash or in-kind payments for information on cache or IED locations. “Every one of these finds effectively weakens the insurgent IED network.”

By defeating the device, Jacobson said this means neutralizing an IED before it can be detonated, or mitigating the effects of an IED detonation at the point of attack.

According to ISAF officials, June 2011 was the highest month for the total number of IEDs with 55 percent being found and cleared before they could explode and cause any casualties.

“Tips by Afghans about emplaced IEDs are on the rise and these tips are literally saving the lives of their

fellow citizens,” said Jacobson.

In addition to reducing the number of casualties caused by IEDs throughout the country, many of the IEDs recovered leave forensic clues that can help Afghan and coalition forces locate and apprehend the individuals responsible, helping to further the attack on the network.

Jacobson said a suitably trained and deployed counter-IED force is pertinent to the short and long-term response to the IED threat in Afghanistan.

Located in Mazar-e-Sharif, formal training of the Afghan counter-IED force began in March 2008 with the IED Disposal School enrolling an average of 240 students per year to attend the 21-week course.

Today, there are 130 counter-IED teams patrolling on a daily basis. This number is up from just 12 teams in 2009. All of the teams consist of both ISAF and Afghan counter-IED professionals, with the vast majority of them Afghan-led and using the same type of equipment as their coalition forces partners.

“Unfortunately, the IED is the weapon of choice of the insurgency, and we do not expect that to change, but we can -- and are -- countering the threat to protect the citizens and forces of Afghanistan from this cowardly device,” said Jacobson.

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6. Suicide Bomber Kills 3 At Karzai Memorial (Calgary Herald)

Friday, 15 July 2011

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/canada-in-afghanistan/Suicide+bomber+kills+Karzai+memorial/5106458/story.html>

Violence surrounding the assassination this week of the Afghan president's brother continued Thursday with an extraordinary attack by a suicide bomber at memorial services for Ahmed Wali Karzai.

The teenage bomber gained access to one of Kandahar's largest mosques and triggered explosives hidden in his turban, killing three people in addition to himself and wounding 15.

At about the same time, another person was killed and two others wounded when a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) exploded in the sprawling slum neighbourhood of Lowe-Wala in north-end Kandahar, which is considered a fertile recruitment area for the Taliban.

The suicide bomb at the mosque went off as hundreds of mourners gathered to hear prayers and express condolences to the family of Ahmed Karzai, 50, who was assassinated Tuesday by one of his own security guards. Karzai was the head of the Kandahar Provincial Council and was considered the most powerful politician in the region.

Members of the Karzai family were present, as well as several Afghan government ministers and other dignitaries, but only one official, Bismillah Afghanmal, was injured and only slightly in one hand.

A Canadian Hercules aircraft had flown President Hamid Karzai and his entourage back to Kabul Wednesday.

Kandahar provincial police chief Gen. Abdul Raziq said at a news conference at the governor's palace that the bomb exploded before noon after the lead cleric had finished his prayers, instantly killing the cleric and two other people sitting nearby.

The bomber gained access to the mosque despite continued massive security in the city.

Raziq said the bomber had gained access to the mosque by posing as a young cleric. He sat next to the senior cleric and suddenly "grabbed the cleric's head and triggered the bomb."

"There were only a few casualties because the turban didn't contain a lot of explosives," Raziq said. A turban is considered sacred and nobody can touch it, Kandahar Gov. Tooryalai Wesa told reporters.

He called it a "violation of the code of the Pashtunwali" to use the turban to conceal a bomb.

"You cannot touch (a turban) because we respect the turban in our culture," he said. "These people (the bomber) are misusing its dignity and honour."

Gen. Muhammed Naim Momin, chief of the National Directorate of Security, Afghanistan's most important government security agency, condemned the bombing as a "cowardly act."

"We don't expect people to hide a bomb in their turban."

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7. Italian Soldier Killed In Afghan War (Press TV)

Tuesday, 12 July 2011

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/188814.html>

A powerful roadside bomb explosion has killed at least one Italian soldier in the troubled western Afghanistan, the Italian defense ministry says.

The defense ministry said in a statement on Tuesday that the soldier lost his life in an explosion in Bakwa district in Farah Province.

Italy has some 4,200 troops in Afghanistan, mostly based in the areas of Kabul and Herat. The European country, however, has lost 40 of its soldiers during the war.

At least 299 US-led foreign forces have also been killed in Afghanistan so far this year.

According to the official figures, more than 2,580 US-led soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since the US-led invasion of the country in 2001.

The security situation remains fragile in Afghanistan despite the presence of 150,000 US-led foreign forces in the country.

The increasing number of troop casualties in Afghanistan has caused widespread anger in the US and other NATO member states, undermining public support for the Afghan war.

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8. Soldier Killed In Afghanistan From 1st Battalion The Rifles (British Forces News)

Tuesday, 19 July 2011

<http://bfbs.com/news/afghanistan/soldier-killed-afghanistan-1st-battalion-rifles-named-49823.html>

A British soldier who was killed in an explosion in Afghanistan yesterday has been named as Corporal Mark Anthony Palin.

The 32-year-old from 1st Battalion The Rifles was in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province and was escorting a specialist team on an operation to recover a cache of IED components when he was caught in an explosion from one of the devices yesterday (Monday).

He had been in Afghanistan since April with the Battalion's B Company as the second in command of a 12-man Multiple.

Spokesman for Task Force Helmand, Lieutenant Colonel Tim Purbrick, said: "As he led the specialist Counter-Improvised Explosive Device team to rendezvous with another patrol at the start of the operation, the soldier was fatally injured in an explosion. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends."

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9. South Ogden Soldier Killed In Afghanistan, Family Says (Deseret News)

Monday, 18 July 2011

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705387756/South-Ogden-soldier-killed-in-Afghanistan-family-says.html>

A Utah soldier was killed in Afghanistan on Saturday when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device, his family said.

U.S. Army Cpl. Raphael Arruda, 21, of South Ogden, was patrolling the Kandahar Province in a mine-resistant vehicle when the truck was hit by an IED, family members said. Cpl. Arruda died as a result of blunt force trauma from the blast.

Arruda would have turned 22 on July 23.

Arruda was a combat engineer, his brother Andrey Arruda said, and had been serving his first tour in Afghanistan since the fall of 2010. He was scheduled to come home in two to three months. Arruda is the third soldier from Utah to be killed this month in Afghanistan.

On July 10, Lance Cpl. Norberto Mendez-Hernandez of Logan died while conducting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan.

On July 5, Army Spc. Preston J. Suter, 22, from Sandy, was killed in Afghanistan when enemy forces attacked his unit with an improvised explosive device, according to the Defense Department.

Andrey Arruda, 19, is also enlisted as a specialist and combat medic and is awaiting his deployment. He said he got a call from a church leader asking him to come home and when he pulled up to the house he saw two soldiers waiting at the door.

"I already knew what happened and didn't have to hear anything," Andrey Arruda said.

Andrey Arruda said he had spoken to his brother two days earlier on Facebook.

The two were already making plans for when Raphael Arruda returned on leave.

"You wouldn't expect anything to happen in those two days," Andrey Arruda said.

Andrey Arruda said his brother liked what he did in the military and planned on studying engineering at the University of Utah after completing his service. He said his brother was the "life of the party" and had a passion for being around people.

"He always had a good attitude about everything," Andrey Arruda said. "He really hates sad moments. Now, if he was here, he'd be like 'What are you doing man? You're supposed to be partying and having fun.'"

Andrey Arruda said the death of his brother creates a whole that can't be filled, but in the wake of this family tragedy he remains dedicated to performing his duties in the military.

"We go in knowing this might happen," he said. "I try to go there to help people and if they do get harmed I want to make sure they make it back OK."

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10. IED Kills 2 Wainwright Soldiers (Army Times)

Tuesday, 19 July 2011

<http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/07/ap-wainwright-stryker-soldiers-killed-afghanistan-071911/>

Two Fort Wainwright soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan.

The base says 33-year-old Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth B. Elwell and 19-year-old Pfc. Tyler M. Springman were killed Sunday while on patrol in Kandahar province by insurgents using an improvised explosive device.

Elwell is from Holland, Pa., and joined the Army in October 1997. He arrived at Fort Wainwright in March. He had two previous deployments to Iraq, as well as a deployment to Bosnia.

Springman is from Hartland, Maine, and joined the Army in June 2010. He completed basic training at Fort Benning, Ga. and arrived at Fort Wainwright in October 2010.

Seven other soldiers were wounded. All are from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division at Fort Wainwright. The 4,000-soldier brigade began deploying to Afghanistan in mid-April for a one-year tour.

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11. NZ Troops Uninjured In Bomb Incident (New Zealand Herald)

Tuesday, 19 July 2011

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10739509

New Zealand troops had a bomb explode during a routine patrol in Afghanistan today, but no one was injured.

The Improvised Explosive Device or IED detonated during a patrol in the northeastern area of Bamyan province at approximately 7.30pm yesterday local time (around 3am today NZ time).

The NZ Defence Force personnel were in armoured vehicles. Neither the troops nor the vehicles suffered any damage.

"IEDs are a known insurgent tactic in this area, and this is also the time of year when the threat level increases," said Commander Joint Forces Major General Dave Gawn in a Defence Force statement. "We will continue to monitor the threat levels in the area to ensure we apply the appropriate measures."

The incident comes a day after New Zealand SAS soldiers were involved in countering insurgents who killed a senior Government aide in Afghanistan. Last month two New Zealand soldiers suffered moderate injuries from shrapnel and gun shot wounds after Taleban fighters attacked the InterContinental Hotel.

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12. Chattanooga-Area Marine Survives Bomb Blast In Afghanistan (Chattanooga Times Free Press)

Tuesday, 19 July 2011

<http://timesfreepress.com/news/2011/jul/19/chattanooga-area-marine-survives-bomb-blast-afghan/>

When his family got the phone call Saturday telling them that U.S. Marine Pfc. Brandon Kyle Pendergrass had been injured in an Afghanistan bomb blast, only one thing stuck out from the flood of information they received.

“He is alive. That’s the big deal,” grandmother Judy Green said Monday.

“That was an early birthday present,” said Green, who will celebrate her 70th birthday Saturday.

Pendergrass, 21 and a 2009 graduate of Meigs County High School, was injured July 16 while riding in a four-vehicle convoy, according to his mother, Mollie Childs, who now has talked to her son a handful of times since the first call about 3 p.m. Saturday.

Pendergrass was guarding detainees in a seven-ton tactical vehicle known as an armadillo when it rolled over an improvised explosive device, his mother said.

When that first call came, Childs, 40, said she could hear what the woman caller was saying on the other end of the line but the shock left her too dazed to comprehend the words.

He was alive. That’s what mattered most.

Military medical officials told Childs that Pendergrass “had bleeding from the nose, ears and mouth, but he was alert. With help, he walked to the chopper himself. He had a concussion, a left radial fracture [of his arm], a lower lumbar fracture,” she said.

But Pendergrass never lost consciousness and remembered everything that happened, she said.

In messages relayed directly to his mother over the phone — Childs laughed that her son made her review his comments “10 times” to make sure she got them right — he described the incident.

“I was one of two Marines holding security on a group of detainees when our tactical vehicle hit an IED,” Pendergrass said. “After the dust had settled, both Pfc. Cuomo and myself were injured. I saw that Pfc. Cuomo was unconscious.

“I grabbed the nearest weapon and continued to hold security on the detainees until our fellow Marines arrived to our aid,” Pendergrass said. “Both Pfc. Cuomo and myself thank God to be alive, and we want to thank everyone for their prayers.”

Childs said she was uncertain of the nature or severity of Cuomo’s injuries or his first name.

Childs, who said she was proud of her son’s toughness, is expecting to head today to Fort Smith, Va., where Pendergrass is expected to arrive for further medical treatment tonight or Wednesday. He faces possible wrist surgery and some time in a back brace, she said.

But Pendergrass already has asked how soon he can return to his unit, she said.

“I could tell he was in pain,” Childs said, “but he’s already asking when he can go back.”

The show of courage makes her “nervous and proud,” she said. “He’s 21 and a Marine ... but he’s still my baby.”

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Green said the Marine's family and extended relations are a community-oriented and patriotic clan, and Kyle Pendergrass is a well-known name as a local fire and rescue member and one of Meigs County's military sons.

Green, a 16-year member of the county's fire and rescue department, said the family is always ready to help, and her grandson is carrying on a time-honored family tradition of service.

"We're just all patriotically inclined to defend the country that we love," she said.

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13. Insurgents Kill Four NATO Service Members In Afghanistan (BNO News)

Monday, 18 July 2011

<http://channel6news.com/2011/07/insurgents-kill-four-nato-service-members-in-afghanistan/>

Four coalition service members were killed on Monday as a result of two separate attacks in eastern and southern Afghanistan, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said.

ISAF said three of its service members were killed as a result of an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in eastern Afghanistan. Another service member died as a result of an IED attack in the country's south.

As usual, the multinational force gave no other details about the incidents, including the exact locations and the nationalities of those killed. "It is ISAF policy to defer casualty identification procedures to the relevant national authorities," a brief statement said.

But a spokesman for the British Ministry of Defense confirmed the casualty in the south, in the Nahr-e Saraj District of Helmand Province, was a British soldier from 1st Battalion The Rifles. His identity was not immediately released.

"The soldier was part of a foot patrol which had been deployed to assist with the recovery of a cache of Improvised Explosive Device components," said Lieutenant Colonel Tim Purbrick, a spokesman for Task Force Helmand. "As he led the specialist Counter-Improvised Explosive Device team to rendezvous with another patrol at the start of the operation, the soldier was fatally injured in an explosion. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends."

Coalition casualties in Afghanistan have been rising sharply in recent years, with a total coalition death toll of 709 in 2010, making it the deadliest year for international troops since the war began in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States.

So far this year, at least 319 coalition service members have been killed in Afghanistan. Most troops are killed in the country's south, which is plagued by IED attacks on troops and civilians. Most of the casualties are American.

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14. Franklin County Soldier Killed In Iraq (WTVD)

Monday, 18 July 2011

<http://abclocal.go.com/wtvd/story?section=news/local&id=8256281>

Relatives of a Franklin County soldier are dealing with his death while on duty in Iraq.

Lucas Elliott, 21, was killed while on his second tour in Iraq as an Army Reserve military police specialist. Elliott's mother and brother, Patti and Bradley Elliott, remember him as a hero called to serve his country after America was attacked nearly 10 years ago.

"He look at the TV as we watched everything happen, and said 'I want to be a soldier, I want to serve my country. I don't want this to happen again,'" Elliott's mother Patti said.

Elliott, who served five years in the military, was killed in southern Iraq Friday when the vehicle he was riding in was hit by an IED. Four other soldiers were injured.

"Those boys and girls need our prayers," Patti Elliott said. "They have gone through a terrible experience seeing one of their brothers fall and they still have to go on with their mission. So, our thoughts and prayers are with them."

Patti Elliott has made troops fighting the nation's wars her mission. She has dedicated herself to helping families grieve over loved ones lost while fighting overseas. She was featured in an ABC11 Armed Forces Salute last year.

"I know what to say to families in situations like this," she said. "I know what they go through. I know what resources to refer them to, but its hard to take your own medicine, though."

Lucas Elliott would have celebrated his 22nd birthday on Monday.

His mother says her son's body arrived at Dover Air Force Base overnight Sunday.

"He's back in the U.S., home for his birthday and that's important to us," Patti Elliott said. "His favorite meal was barbeque ribs, so we will have that today and celebrate his life. "I still worry and I want everyone to pray for his brothers and sisters who witnessed his death and have to carry on with the mission."

Lucas Elliott will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. The date of his service has not yet been set.

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15. Eighteen Wanted Men Detained, Explosive Charge Dismantled In Basra (Aswat al-Iraq)

Monday, 18 July 2011

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=143814&l=1

At least 18 wanted men have been detained and an explosive charge was dismantled in security operations in different parts of southern Iraq's Basra Province on Sunday, a Basra Relations & Media office source reported.

“A police force has implemented an inspection operation in different parts of Basra Province on Sunday, detaining 18 wanted men, among them some who have committed murder crimes,” the source told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

He said the same force had managed to dismantle an explosive charge, planted in Abul-Khasib Street, 20 km to the south of Basra.

Basra, the center of the Province carrying the same name, is 590 km to the south of Baghdad.

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16. Roadside Bomb Wounds Three in Mahaweel (Reuters)

Monday, 18 July 2011

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/factbox-security-developments-in-iraq-july-18>

A roadside bomb blew up, wounding three policemen late on Sunday in Mahaweel, 60 km (35 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

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17. Roadside Bomb Wounds Two In Mahmudiya (Reuters)

Sunday, 17 July 2011

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/factbox-security-developments-in-iraq-july-17>

A roadside bomb exploded and wounded two people in the town of Mahmudiya, 30 km (20 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

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18. West Iraq Hindiya Township's Blast Kills 6, Injures 31 (Aswat al-Iraq)

Saturday, 16 July 2011

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=143770&l=1

A booby-trapped blast in Hindiya township of western Iraq's Karbala Province on Friday had killed and injured 37 persons, among them 6 killed, most of them visitors, a Hindiya health source reported on Saturday.

"The result of the booby-trapped blast inside a garage in Hindiya township's Civil Defense garage, had reached 6 people killed and 31 injured, most of them visitors coming from southern Iraq's provinces," the health source told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

The explosion took place in Hindiya township, 20 km to the east of Karbala, where thousands of visitors are attending the anniversary of the birthday of Imam Mohammed al-Mahdi, the 12th Leading Shiite Imam, born on Shaaban 15th of the Muslim Hijri Year 255, 8th Century AD.

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19. Civilian Killed, Injured In Anbar Explosion (Aswat al-Iraq)

Saturday, 06 July 2011

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=143776&l=1

An Iraqi civilian has been killed and another injured in an explosive charge blast in west Anbar's al-Baghdady village on Saturday, an Anbar police source reported.

"A civilian has been killed and another was injured in an explosive blast on a roadside in al-Baghdady village on Saturday," the security source told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

The source noted that police forces have boosted security measures, inspecting the whole area of the blast, as a precautional measure against the existence of other explosive charges in the area.

Ramadi, the center of Anbar Province, is 110 km to the west of Baghdad.

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20. Two Killed In Mosul Blast (Aswat al-Iraq)

Sunday, 17 July 2011

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=143811&l=1

A security source in Ninewa province said today that a man and a woman were killed in bomb blast mid of Mosul.

The source told Aswat al-Iraq that the bomb exploded in Cornish street, mid of the city, which led to their death.

The explosion resulted in material losses, as the police sources reported.

Mosul, the center of the province, lies 405 km north of the capital, Baghdad.

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21. Four Soldiers Injured By Bomb Explosion In Mosul (Aswat al-Iraq)

Saturday, 16 July 2011

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=143792&l=1

Four Iraqi soldiers were hurt today by a bomb blast north of Mosul city, security sources in Ninewa province announced.

The source told Aswat al-Iraq that the four soldiers were hit while on duty on a patrol mission north of Mosul.

The wounded were admitted to a nearby hospital.

No other details were given.

Mosul, the center of Ninewa province, lies 405 km north of the capital, Baghdad.

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22. Three Civilians Injured In IED Blast In Baghdad (Aswar al-Iraq)

Saturday, 16 July 2011

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default.aspx?page=article_page&c=slideshow&id=143778

Three Iraqi civilians have been injured in an improvised explosive charge (IED) blast under their car in southern Baghdad's Daura district on Saturday, a security source reported.

“An explosive charge blew up on Saturday noon under a mini-truck, carrying foodstuff in southern Baghdad's Daura district, wounding 3 persons, who were driven to a nearby hospital for treatment,” the security source told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

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23. Roadside Bomb Targeting Iraqi Security Patrol Kills Policeman, Passer-by In Baghdad

(Associated Press), Sunday, 17 July 2011

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/roadside-bomb-targeting-iraqi-security-patrol-kills-policeman-passer-by-in-baghdad/2011/07/17/gIQAoX8WJI_story.html

Iraqi officials say a roadside bomb targeting a security patrol has killed one policeman and a passer-by in western Baghdad.

An Iraqi policeman says the blast Sunday morning also wounded three people in the Sunni-dominated Amariyah neighborhood near the capital's airport. A medic at the al-Yarmouk hospital confirmed the casualties.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information. Insurgents often attack security forces to highlight Iraq's continued vulnerability as U.S. troops prepare to leave at the end of the year.

Washington and Baghdad are discussing whether up to 10,000 U.S. troops should remain into 2012.

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24. Seven Killed In Iraq Violent Attacks (Press TV)

Monday, 18 July 2011

<http://www.presstv.com/detail/189571.html>

In an assault on a police checkpoint in Iraq's northern city of Mosul, unidentified gunmen shot three people dead, two of them policemen, while a bomb explosion killed a woman and a man, AFP reported on Sunday.

According to the police, another two people were slain and one was injured in a bomb attack in the al-Amriyah district of the western part of Iraq's capital, Baghdad.

The incidents came after a motorcycle bomb, targeting Shia pilgrims in Iraq's holy city of Karbala, some 110 km (68 miles) south of Baghdad, killed at least one and left 27 others injured on Saturday.

June has been the deadliest month so far in 2011 in terms of violence fatalities in Iraq, when according to the Iraqi government, 271 Iraqis lost their lives in attacks, including 155 civilians, 77 policemen and 39 soldiers.

Bombings and other forms of violence have become a near daily occurrence in Iraq in recent months as the US government has made no secret of its strong desire to extend its military presence in the war-torn country past the December 2011 withdrawal deadline.

The US-led military invasion of Iraq began in 2003 under the false pretext of locating and destroying weapons of mass destruction (WMD) presumably held by the repressive regime of executed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. However, no WMDs were ever found in Iraq following the American occupation of the Middle Eastern country.

The military invasion, meanwhile, led to over a million 'violent deaths' among Iraqi citizens, according to a study conducted by the prestigious British polling group, Opinion Research Business (ORB).

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25. Nine Killed In Attacks On Shiite Holy City In Iraq (CNN)

Saturday, 16 July 2011

http://articles.cnn.com/2011-07-16/world/iraq.shiite.attacks_1_karbala-shiite-pilgrims-shiite-holy-city?s=PM:WORLD

Separate blasts in Iraq killed nine people and left dozens wounded in attacks targeting pilgrims near the Shiite holy city of Karbala, authorities said Saturday.

An additional 70 people were wounded in the three blasts between Friday and Saturday, the Interior Ministry officials said.

A motorcycle rigged with explosives detonated in southern Karbala Saturday morning, killing one and wounding 27 others.

In a second attack, two car bombs exploded Friday afternoon within a few seconds in the Awan district north of Karbala. Two died and 15 were injured.

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26. Civilian Killed, Injured In Anbar Explosion (Aswat al-Iraq)

Saturday, 16 July 2011

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=143776&l=1

An Iraqi civilian has been killed and another injured in an explosive charge blast in west Anbar's al-Baghdady village on Saturday, an Anbar police source reported.

“A civilian has been killed and another was injured in an explosive blast on a roadside in al-Baghdady village on Saturday,” the security source told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

The source noted that police forces have boosted security measures, inspecting the whole area of the blast, as a precautional measure against the existence of other explosive charges in the area.

Ramadi, the center of Anbar Province, is 110 km to the west of Baghdad.

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27. Two Policemen Killed By Roadside Bomb In Dagestan (Associated Press)

Monday, 18 July 2011

<http://www.macleans.ca/article.jsp?content=w7535375>

A roadside bombing in Russia's restive republic of Dagestan has killed two policeman and wounded three others.

Police spokesman Vyacheslav Gasanov said Monday that the homemade bomb hit an police patrol as they travelled overnight in a car in the town of Kaspiisk. He said the blast was the equivalent of three to four kilograms (six to nine pounds) of TNT.

Dagestan is plagued by attacks on police and small clashes with insurgents believed to be inspired by separatists in neighbouring Chechnya.

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