

Taliban shoot down US chopper in Afghanistan

Suicide bomber kills 2 US soldiers

AP, AFP, Kabul

Insurgents shot down a US helicopter after exchanging fire with its crew in central Afghanistan on Monday, while a suicide bomber in the north killed two US soldiers inside a police station, officials said.

The helicopter was forced down in Wardak, one province west of Kabul, after insurgents hit it with gunfire Monday, said Lt Cmdr Walter Matthew, a US military spokesman. The crew survived and

have been extracted from the area, he said.

"The helicopter crew exchanged fire with the enemy before the damage brought the helicopter down," Matthews said. Coalition troops secured the area and "are in the process of recovering" the helicopter, he said.

At least four militants were killed in the exchange, said Fazel Karim Muslim, the chief of Sayed Abad district.

Wardak province has seen an increase in insurgent activity the

last two years, and its main highway is now extremely risky to travel on, particularly at night. In mid-October, a US Special Forces raid freed a kidnapped American working for the Army Corps of Engineers who had been held by his captors in Wardak for two months.

Insurgents rarely bring down military helicopters, though they have hit several in recent years.

Separately, a suicide bomber wearing a police uniform blew himself up inside a police station in

northern Afghanistan on Monday, killing two American soldiers and wounding five other people, officials said.

The bomber entered a police station in Pul-e-Khumri, the capital of Baghlan province, while Afghan officials were meeting with US troops advising a police training programme, provincial police chief Gen Abdul Rahman Sayed Khel said.

The blast killed two American soldiers, a US military spokesman said.

Five top Hizbul militants killed in Kashmir

PTI, Jammu

In a setback to the Hizbul Mujahideen, five top terrorists of the outfit were shot dead on Monday in an encounter with army personnel in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Acting on a tip off, troops launched a search and cordon operation in Nawapachi area early Monday morning and came under fire from militants, a senior army officer told PTI.

The troops retaliated and in the ensuing encounter five top Hizb terrorists were killed, he said.

Four AK rifles, arms and ammunition and explosives were recovered from the site, the officer said.



Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi (C) shakes hands with an Afghan delegation member as Abdullah Abdullah (R) head of the Afghan delegation looks on during a two-day session of a mini-jirga or traditional council in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistani and Afghan officials and tribal elders met for talks in Islamabad to find ways to end mounting Taliban and al-Qaeda violence along their troubled border.



Pakistani people gather at the site of a bomb blast in Quetta yesterday. A car bomb exploded in the insurgency-hit southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta, killing at least two people and wounding eight others, police said.

US refrains from making ground raids into Pakistan

AFP, Washington

The United States is refraining from using its special forces on Pakistani territory following a raid nearly two months ago that resulted in civilian casualties and vehement protests from Islamabad, The New York Times reported on its website late Sunday.

The US military has stepped up attacks on militants in Pakistani territory since a new civilian government came to power in Islamabad in March, and the incidents have become an issue in the US presidential election.

Relations have also been strained between the "war on

terror" allies by a raid by US special operations forces into Pakistan on September 3, which killed several Pakistanis.

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari has vowed zero tolerance against violations of his country's sovereignty amid the strikes, which have stoked anti-US sentiment in Pakistan.

According to The Times, following the attack, Pakistani national security adviser Mahmud Ali Durrani made an unannounced visit to Washington and expressed his country's anger in person to top White House officials, including national security adviser Stephen Hadley.

But while ground raids have stopped, attacks by remotely piloted Predator aircraft, which are operated by the Central Intelligence Agency, have increased sharply in the past three months, the report said.

There were at least 18 Predator strikes since the beginning of August, some deep inside Pakistan's tribal areas, compared with five strikes during the first seven months of 2008, the paper noted.

However, US officials have complained that relying on airstrikes alone, the United States will be unable to weaken al-Qaeda's grip in the tribal areas of Pakistan, The Times said.

Dalai Lama signals strategy shift with China

AFP, Dharamshala

The Dalai Lama has opened the door to a tougher China policy following a complete lack of progress in talks on Tibetan autonomy with Beijing, aides and exiled Tibetan leaders said Monday.

The future course of the Tibetan movement, including the possibility of an historic switch from demanding autonomy to a demand for full independence, will be the focus of a special meeting next month of around 300 delegates representing the worldwide exiled Tibetan community.

"The only non-negotiable aspect is that the movement will still be non-violent. Everyone is agreed on that," the Dalai Lama's spokesman Tenzin Takha told AFP.

In his first public address since undergoing surgery for gallstones, the Dalai Lama said at the weekend that he had given up on extracting any concessions from Beijing after seven rounds of talks between Tibetan envoys and Chinese officials.

"He's lost hope in trying to reach a solution with the present Chinese leadership which is simply not willing to address the issues," Takha said.

Maldives set for landmark presidential run-off today

AFP, Male

The first-ever democratic presidential battle in the Maldives goes to a second round today, with Asia's longest serving leader facing his most outspoken critic, a former political prisoner.

Elections three weeks ago produced no clear winner after Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who has run the Indian Ocean archipelago unchallenged for 30 years, failed to deliver a knock-out blow to second-placed Mohamed "Anni" Nasheed.

Tuesday's vote will see the Maldives' first elected president following political reforms to the Muslim nation, known for its luxury holiday resorts, introduced in the wake of pro-democracy protests and international pressure.

The two rivals held final campaign rallies on Sunday night in the capital Male where more than a quarter of the 208,000 electorate is concentrated.

Gayoom, who has ruled since 1978, was expected to receive additional votes this time around from supporters of a moderate opposition candidate who finished behind Nasheed in the first vote, the leader's spokesman said.

"What we really need is another 10,000 votes and Gayoom is comfortably home. But for the opposition, they need to get much, much more than that," spokesman Mohammed Shareef said.

In the October 8 vote, Gayoom won 41 percent -- short of the 50 percent required to avoid a run-off -- while Nasheed collected 25 percent.

Pakistan, Afghanistan hold 'mini-jirga' on violence

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani and Afghan officials and tribal leaders met for talks in Islamabad on Monday to find ways to end mounting Taliban and al-Qaeda violence along their troubled border.

The two-day meeting has been dubbed a "mini-jirga" as it is a smaller follow-up to a traditional "jirga" or tribal meeting held between the two feuding neighbours in August 2007.

"Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are faced with terrorism and together they need to face the challenge," Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told the start of the session.

The meeting features 50 members -- 25 from each side -- including government officials, representatives of political parties and members of the ethnic Pashtun tribes that straddle the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Afghanistan's hardline Islamist Taliban militia, which

ruled that country from 1996-2001, and a newer grouping of Pakistani Taliban militants are both effectively Pashtun groups.

Violence has soared on both sides of the border, with Washington and Kabul urging Islamabad to tackle militant "safe havens" in Pakistan's tribal belt. Pakistan has also suffered a wave of suicide attacks.

Tribesmen on the Pakistani side have recently set up a number of tribal armies to counter the growing militant influence in the area, while Pakistani troops launched a two-month operation in the Bajaur tribal region in August.

"Today Pakistan is more committed than ever not to allow anybody to use its territory for activities against any other country," said Pakistani's Qureshi.

He also vowed that foreign fighters -- Pakistani jargon for al-Qaeda -- would be expelled but at the same time the "sovereignty of Pakistan will be protected at all cost."

The sovereignty issue relates to an increase in controversial US missile strikes in Pakistan, the latest of which killed a Taliban commander and 15 other people on Sunday night, according to officials.

The leader of the Afghan delegation, former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah, said terrorism was a global challenge but "unfortunately both countries are at its centre."

"Both are moving together to meet the challenge," he said.

The "jirgagai (mini-jirga) would be instrumental in shaping up the ways to tackle rising militant violence," the deputy chairman of the Afghanistan Jirga Monitoring Commission, Farooq Wardag, was quoted as saying by the official Associated Press of Pakistan.

State media here said the meeting will form a committee to forward proposals to the two countries' governments.

KRISHI GOBESHONA FOUNDATION

A non-profit foundation to support CGP for agricultural research
Reg. No. E 684(05)07

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council Campus, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215
Telephone: 880-2-9111041, 9131170. Fax: 880-2-8113032, E-mail: barc@bdmail.net

Announcement Call for Proposals

Krishi Gobeshona Foundation (KGF) is a non-profit organization established in 2007 under Companies Act 1994. KGF is an independent organization implementing Competitive Grants Program (CGP). The World Bank financed National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP Phase I Cr. 4386-BD) would provide initial funding for KGF and CGP.

CGP would fund location-specific, pre-identified, high priority, multi-disciplinary, short to medium term, problem-solving research and development. It would help to develop a more pluralistic research system by opening the CGP to the NARS institutes, universities, other research institutes, NGOs, and, through co-financing, to the private sector and the international institutes with excellence in agricultural research. The research themes to be supported would be those that are crucial to bridge the yield gaps, respond to the problems identified through micro level priorities and address other demand-based issues for improving agricultural productivity and farm income. Major focus would be on on-farm applied and adaptive research, including marketing, socio-economic aspects and value addition.

The KGF supports short to medium-term project relevant to any of its research themes seeking solution to the problem(s) with clearly defined methods and objective(s) achievable within the stipulated timeframe. Such support will normally be for 12-24 months (maximum 36 months if justified). No grants will be made to an individual having no institutional affiliation and proven capacity to perform for the desired output. KGF in collaboration with Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council developed research agenda in CGP thematic areas for its first round of Call for Proposals.

KGF is now inviting applications for proposal/concept note in prescribed format for the first round CGP. Please note that the CGP priority thematic areas, prescribed format and general guidelines for preparation and submission of proposal for CGP are available at KGF office. Interested applicants may visit the website: www.barc.gov.bd for further information.

The deadline for the submission of completed application (2 copies) in prescribed format is 20 November, 2008. The sealed envelope containing the proposal should clearly indicate **Thematic Area and Title of the Proposal** with name and address of the proponent. Applications submitted through e-mail will not be considered. KGF authority has the right to accept or reject any or all application/proposals without assigning any reason thereof.

Dr. M. Nurul Alam
Executive Director
Krishi Gobeshona Foundation (KGF)
BARC Campus, Farmgate
Dhaka-1215



This picture taken on Sunday shows Maldives president and the Dhivehi Rahiyunge Party's (DRP) presidential candidate Maumoon Abdul Gayoom applauding with supporters during an electoral rally in Male, the capital island. The Indian Ocean atoll nation is set for a run off election today after incumbent President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom failed to win outright majority in the October 8 election.

Protest against Indian rule shuts down Kashmir

AP, Srinagar

Shops, businesses and government offices closed across Indian-administered Kashmir on Monday as separatists called a general strike to mark the anniversary of the day Indian troops took control of the region in 1947.

Thousands of Indian soldiers in riot gear patrolled the streets of Srinagar, the main city, and prohibited any gathering of more than five people, said senior police officer B. Srinivas.



A project financed by the European Union



Bangladesh

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) : Re-advertised

PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT)

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, seeks proposals from interested and well qualified organizations to provide training and study services for weaver group training program of Economic Development Cluster under UNDP-CHTDF in supporting capacity building of the beneficiaries.

The solicitation documents have been uploaded on the UNDP website http://www.undp.org.bd/proc_more.php

The deadline for submission of RFPs will be 5 p.m., 10th November 2008