

Taliban attack US aid company, five killed

REUTERS, Kunduz

Taliban suicide bombers and gunmen stormed a US contracting company office in northern Afghanistan yesterday, killing five people including three foreigners and wounding 24 others, a senior official said.

The pre-dawn attack happened in relatively peaceful Kunduz province when insurgents attacked the newly opened offices of Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI), provincial governor Mohammad Omar told Reuters.

In a statement, President Hamid Karzai said the raid was the work of "foreign paymasters" -- a veiled reference to Pakistan and the links Afghanistan says Islamabad has with the Taliban.

One British citizen was killed during the fierce five-hour gunbattle that ensued, along with a German national and a Filipino, while two Afghans also died, Omar said.

"Our security forces managed to rescue around eight American workers inside the compound," he said.

The latest attack comes as newly appointed U.S. and NATO forces commander General David Petraeus was due to arrive in the country to oversee the fight against the Taliban and try to reverse the insurgency's momentum. Earlier, NATO said a western soldier died in a separate insurgent attack in eastern Afghanistan.

According to its website (www.dai.com), the company is one of USAID's principal service providers and specialises in post-conflict reconstruction, local government, agribusiness and natural resource management.

At least one of the bombers blew himself up in front of the gate to allow other fighters to push inside, triggering a fierce five-hour gunbattle with security guards and police who surrounded the building, Omar said.

BRAZEN ATTACKS The raid in Kunduz follows a similar pattern of brazen attacks by insurgents elsewhere in the country, with Taliban fighters trying to seize government or foreign-linked buildings before going down with guns blazing and suicide vests.

Afghan police and security guards battled insurgents for most of the morning before the attackers were killed, Omar



US soldiers carry a body away from the compound of a building which was attacked by Taliban insurgents in Kunduz yesterday.

said. Foreign workers fled to the roof of the five-story building for safety as the battle continued in floors below.

International troops helped Afghan security forces ferry wounded civilians to a nearby military base for emergency care, a coalition military spokeswoman said in a statement. A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said at least six suicide bombers and fighters were

involved in the attack in a province mainly patrolled by German forces under NATO-command.

Violence in Afghanistan is at its worst despite the presence of some 150,000 foreign and over 100,000 Afghan troops and police. More than 100 foreign troops died in Afghanistan last month, the deadliest since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.

Petraeus arrives in Afghanistan to lead faltering war

REUTERS, Kabul

The United States' top field commander arrives in Afghanistan yesterday to take charge of the faltering war, pledging to tackle the nine-year-old Taliban insurgency with a strategy he successfully pioneered in Iraq.

General David Petraeus was due to land a day after his appointment was confirmed by the US Senate and just hours after the US House of Representatives approved \$33 billion (£21.7 billion pounds) in funding for a troop surge he hopes will turn the tide of the war.

An amendment demanding an exit timetable from Afghanistan failed, but got 162 votes -- the biggest anti-war vote in the House on Afghanistan to date.

Petraeus's appointment could be a last throw of the dice for Washington to end an increasingly costly conflict that is draining Western budgets as they emerge from one of the worst global recessions in history.

A formal change-of-command ceremony will be held within days, allied military officials said on Friday.

The surge will bring to 150,000 the number of foreign troops in Afghanistan just as the new strategy takes root. It entails tackling the Taliban in their strongholds while relying on the government to simultaneously improve local governance and development.

The Taliban showed on Friday just how capable they are of operating outside their traditional strongholds by launching a daring commando-style raid on the office of an American company that provides logistical support for US government aid in relatively peaceful Kunduz, in the north.

A Briton, German, Filipino and two Afghans were killed in the pre-dawn attack, provincial officials said, as well as the six insurgents who mounted the raid.

Yesterday, the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that Petraeus now commands said two service members had died after separate insurgent attacks in the south and east, the alliance said.

TURN THE TIDE Petraeus, who wrote the US army's field guide on waging a coun-



ter-insurgency, used the tactics to help turn the tide of the Iraq war and the strategy was introduced to Afghanistan earlier this year by former commander General Stanley McChrystal.

McChrystal was sacked last week after he and some aides disparaged senior administration officials in a magazine profile.

While Petraeus has pledged to continue with the same strategy, he told NATO chiefs in Brussels on Thursday that some operational tactics would be reviewed -- including air strikes on suspected Taliban hideouts.

The issue came to a head last year after a series of air attacks killed scores of civilians -- including 140 in one incident -- but McChrystal's arrival was credited with vastly reducing collateral damage.

Petraeus said on Thursday that any tactics that raised the possibility of more soldiers being killed needed to be reviewed.

More than 1,800 foreign troops have died in Afghanistan since the Taliban were overthrown in 2001 -- including more than 100 last month, the bloodiest since the war began.

"I have a moral imperative as a commander ... to bring all force that is available when our troops -- and, by the way, our Afghan partners -- are in a tough position," he told NATO chiefs.

The last two weeks have thrown an especially harsh light on the war effort, with new reports of corruption in President Hamid Karzai's government and the change in command of foreign forces.

Doubts have also been raised over the commitment of the government to push governance and development alongside the military drive, and also the ability of Afghan forces to take over responsibility for security.

At the same time, Karzai has been wooing the Taliban with a series of modest peace overtures, all have which have been rejected by the hardline Islamist movement, which insists all foreign forces must leave before they will end the insurgency.

25 hurt in fresh protests in curfew-hit Indian Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Some 25 people were injured in anti-India protests around Kashmir as police fired teargas to break up demonstrations held despite a strict curfew across much of the insurgency-hit region.

The region has been hit by strikes, demonstrations and curfews over the killing of civilians during the last month by Indian police and paramilitary forces struggling to control separatist rallies.

Troops enforced a strict curfew across major towns in Muslim-majority Kashmir valley on Friday, preventing many worshippers attending mosques on the

Muslim day of prayer.

In Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian Kashmir, police backed by paramilitary soldiers sealed off neighbourhoods with barbed wire and blocked roads with security vehicles.

"A strict curfew is in force in major towns and no one will be allowed to violate the restrictions," senior police officer Farooq Ahmed said.

The Jamia Masjid, the main mosque in Srinagar, was among the many mosques worshippers were unable to attend for Friday prayers.

Small groups of protesters defied the curfew in Srinagar, clashing briefly with baton-wielding riot police, witnesses

said. Other protests also occurred near Sopore town, where paramilitary forces shot dead two Muslim men last Friday after their vehicle was attacked by protesters. The town has been under curfew since then.

In Anantnag town, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Srinagar, hundreds of Muslims defied strict curfew restrictions and held a protest demonstration, witnesses said.

The protests also spread to northern Kupwara district, which borders Pakistan-administered Kashmir, sparking fierce clashes after police blocked the protesters at three places.

Nepal's political crisis sparks concern over peace

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's political leaders were locked in talks yesterday to try to form a new government amid mounting international concern about the country's faltering peace process.

Major disagreements have emerged between the three biggest political parties over who should succeed outgoing prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, who stepped down on Wednesday under intense pressure from the opposition Maoists.

The former rebels, who fought a 10-year civil war with the state before entering mainstream politics and winning

elections in 2008, say that as the largest party in parliament they should lead a power-sharing government.

But just six days before a deadline to form a national consensus government expires, rival parties have ruled out joining any administration led by the Maoists.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement urging the parties to "intensify their efforts towards the formation of a consensus government" and implement commitments made in the 2006 peace agreement.

Four years after the war ended, many parts of the peace deal have still not been fulfilled, notably the integration of thou-

sands of Maoist former fighters into the national army.

The United States said it was "vitaly important" to make progress in the peace process and called the prime minister's resignation an opportunity to move the process forward and bring stability to Nepal.

Nepal's President Ram Baran Yadav has given political leaders until July 7 to form a power-sharing government.

"We are trying to achieve consensus but it will take time," said Rabindra Adhikari, a senior member of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-UML), which leads the outgoing government.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Unnayan Gবেষণা প্রতিষ্ঠান (Bangladesh Unnayan Research Foundation). It includes the organization's logo, name, address, and a table of job opportunities. The table lists three positions: Chairman of the Board, Director, and Project Officer, with details on qualifications and benefits. The advertisement is dated 30 June 2010.

Advertisement for Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd (DPDC). It features the company logo and name in Bengali and English, along with contact information. The main text is a job opportunity notice for a Director (Finance) position, detailing the company's role, the job's responsibilities, required qualifications, age limits, and remuneration package. The notice is dated 01/07/10.