

Six U.S. troops killed near Bagram

Taliban insurgency intensifies in opium-rich region

By LYNNE O'DONNELL
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A suicide attacker rammed an explosives-laden motorcycle into a joint NATO-Afghan patrol Monday, killing six American troops in the deadliest attack on international forces since August. Two U.S. troops and an Afghan were wounded.

The attack happened as Taliban fighters overran a strategic district in southern Helmand province, the scene of some of the deadliest fighting between the Taliban and international combat forces prior to the 2014 withdrawal, adding weight to Pentagon predictions that

the insurgency is gaining strength.

The soldiers were targeted as they moved through a village near Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. military facility in Afghanistan, NATO and Afghan officials said. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

A U.S. official confirmed that six American troops were killed and two wounded. An Afghan was also wounded. The official was not authorized to discuss the incident publicly so spoke on condition of anonymity.

“Our heartfelt sympathies go out to the families and friends of those affected in this tragic incident, especially during this holiday

season,” U.S. Army Brig. Gen. William Shoffner, head of public affairs at NATO’s Resolute Support base in the Afghan capital Kabul, said in a statement.

In Washington, White House press secretary Josh Earnest said the nation’s thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and their loved ones, and that the U.S. will continue to work jointly with Afghans to promote peace and stability in their country.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter in statement called the attack “a painful reminder of the dangers our troops face every day in Afghanistan.”

It was the deadliest attack on foreign troops in four

months. On Aug. 22, three American contractors with the RS base were killed in a suicide attack in Kabul. On Aug. 7 and 8, Kabul was the scene of three insurgent attacks within 24 hours that left at least 35 people dead. One of the attacks, on a U.S. special operations forces base outside Kabul, killed one U.S. soldier and eight Afghan civilian contractors.

In the year since the international drawdown, the Taliban insurgency has intensified. Although the combat mission ended last year, around 9,800 U.S. troops and almost 4,000 NATO forces remain in Afghanistan. They have a mandate to “train, assist and advise” their Afghan counterparts, who are now effectively fighting

a battle-hardened Taliban alone.

Monday’s attack came as Taliban fighters and government forces battled for control of a strategic district in the southern province of Helmand after it was overrun by insurgents, delivering a serious blow to the government’s thinly spread and exhausted forces.

Mohammad Jan Rasulyar, Helmand’s deputy governor, said insurgents took control of Sangin district late Sunday.

Rasulyar had taken the unusual step of alerting Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to the dire security situation and requesting urgent reinforcements through an open letter posted on Facebook on Sunday, saying that he had not been

able to make contact through other means.

“We had to take to social media to reach you as Helmand is falling into the hands of the enemy and it requires your immediate attention,” Rasulyar wrote in his Facebook post to Ghani.

On Monday, Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said Afghan Army commandoes and special forces had arrived in Sangin to push a counter-offensive. He told reporters the Afghan air force had conducted 160 combat and transport flights over Sangin in the past 48 hours.

Helmand is an important Taliban base as it produces most of the world’s opium, a crop that helps fund the insurgency.

Mistaken for Miss Universe

NEW YORK (AP)—The Miss Universe pageant and host Steve Harvey doubled down on the apologies Monday after an excruciating live television moment — announcing incorrectly that Miss Colombia had won and then taking the crown from her head to give to a rival from the Philippines.

The fallout from Sunday’s show made Harvey an online symbol of “oops” moments, drew a reaction from Colombia’s president and even a gloating tweet from Donald Trump, the pageant’s former owner.

As televised on Fox, the contest was down to Ariadna Gutierrez Arevalo of Colombia and Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach of the Philippines when Harvey, a first-time Miss Universe host, proclaimed Gutierrez the winner after a long dramatic pause.

Music swelled, Gutierrez was fitted for a sash, given flowers and a crown was placed on her head. That made it two straight Miss Universe winners for Colombia, where the pageants are taken seriously. She bathed in applause for nearly two minutes before Harvey slowly made his way back onto the stage.

“I have to apologize,” he said. “The first runner-up is Colombia.”

The camera switched to a bewildered-looking



Former Miss Universe Paulina Vega, center, takes away the flowers and sash from Miss Colombia Ariadna Gutierrez, left, before giving it to Miss Philippines Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach, right, at the Miss Universe pageant Sunday in Las Vegas.

Wurtzbach, who came back on the stage to get the crown as the same celebratory music repeated. Harvey said she’d be taking her first walk as Miss Universe, but mostly she stood immobile. A woman stood in between the two contestants, trying to

comfort Gutierrez by rubbing her back.

Two minutes later, the comedian who hosts his own daytime talk show as well as the game show “Family Feud” returned, saying “let me just take control of this.”

Harvey explained on the

air that he misread the card he was given with the names of the winners. Colombia was listed as the first runner-up, and he’d been confused with how it was written. He held up the card for the camera.

“It is my mistake,” he said. “Still, it’s a great night. Please

don’t hold it against the ladies. We feel very badly, but it’s still a great night.”

Harvey later tweeted an apology to the women and viewers. “I feel terrible,” he wrote. The Miss Universe organization also issued an apology on Monday.

Study shows cardiac arrest victims ignore warning signs

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON — Sudden cardiac arrest may not always be so sudden: New research suggests a lot of people may ignore potentially life-saving warning signs hours, days, even a few weeks before they collapse.

Cardiac arrest claims about 350,000 U.S. lives a year. It’s not a heart attack, but worse: The heart abruptly stops beating, its electrical activity knocked out of rhythm. CPR can buy critical time, but so few patients survive that it’s been hard to tell if the longtime medical belief is correct that it’s a strike with little or no advance warning.

An unusual study that has closely tracked sudden

cardiac arrest in Portland for over a decade got around that roadblock, using interviews with witnesses, family and friends after patients collapse and tracking down their medical records.

About half of middle-aged patients for whom symptom information could be found had experienced warning signs, mostly chest pain or shortness of breath, in the month before suffering a cardiac arrest, researchers reported Monday. The research offers the possibility of one day preventing some cardiac arrests if doctors could figure out how to find and treat the people most at risk.

“By the time the 911 call is made, it’s much too late for at least 90 percent of people,” said Dr. Sumeet Chugh of the

Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute in Los Angeles, who led the study reported in Annals of Internal Medicine. “There’s this window of opportunity that we really didn’t know existed.”

Importantly, a fraction of patients considered their symptoms bad enough to call 911 before they collapsed, and they were most likely to survive.

That’s a reminder to the public not to ignore possible signs of heart trouble in hopes they’re just indigestion, said University of Pittsburgh emergency medicine specialist Dr. Clifton Callaway, who wasn’t involved in Monday’s study but praised it.

“Chest pain, shortness of breath — those are things you should come in the middle of

the night to the emergency department and get checked out,” said Callaway, who chairs the American Heart Association’s emergency care committee. “We strongly recommend you don’t try to ride it out at home.”

Previous heart attacks, coronary heart disease, and certain inherited disorders that affect heartbeat all can increase the risk of sudden cardiac arrest. People known to be at high risk may receive an implanted defibrillator to shock the heart back into rhythm. But cardiac arrest is such a public health problem that the Institute of Medicine last summer urged a national campaign to teach CPR, so more bystanders know how to help.

Monday’s data from the Oregon Sudden Unexpected

Death Study examined records for nearly 1,100 people ages 35 to 65 who suffered a cardiac arrest between 2002 and 2012.

For about a quarter of patients, researchers could find no information about whether they experienced symptoms — making it impossible to say just how common warning signs really are.

First body recovered from China landslide, 81 still missing

SHENZHEN, China (AP) — Rescuers pulled one body from the debris Tuesday and said 81 people were still missing two days after a man-made mountain of excavated soil and construction waste crashed into an industrial park China’s manufacturing center of Shenzhen.

The official Xinhua News Agency said rescuers retrieved one body in the early hours of Tuesday. It’s the first reported death from the disaster.

The official China News Service said the number of the missing people went down to 81, from previous day’s 85, but did not explain

how.

Authorities said the landslide buried or damaged 33 buildings in the industrial park in Shenzhen, a city near Hong Kong that makes products ranging from cell-phones to cars that are sold around the world.

Residents blamed the government while officials cited human error, with one ministry saying, “The pile was too big, the pile was too steep.”

The landslide Sunday covered an area of 450,000 square yards with silt 33 feet deep, authorities said. At least 16 people were hospitalized, including children, Xinhua said.



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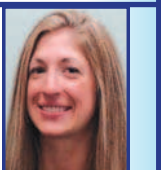
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