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Five Afghan soldiers killed, five injured from open fire suspected by Taliban

By Noor Khan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

QALAT, Afghanistan — Suspected Taliban insurgents ambushed government troops traveling through a mountain gorge in southern Afghanistan, killing five soldiers and injuring five others, an Afghan military commander said Monday.

The troops, riding in a pickup truck, were on a security patrol in Kighai Gorge when attackers opened fire on them late Sunday, said Haji Granai, a military commander in Kandahar, capital of the southern Kandahar province.

Granai blamed fighters from the Taliban insurgents for the attack. No group claimed responsibility, however.

Afghan authorities routinely blame Taliban and fighters loyal to renegade warlord

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar for attacks targeting government troops and installations.

The two groups are suspected to have joined and stepped up their operations against the post-Taliban government and coalition forces in recent weeks.

"This is a mountainous area. Taliban are hiding there," Granai said.

Three weeks ago, hundreds of Afghan government troops were sent to the area, looking for Taliban remnants, he said.

Following the Sunday attack, government troops arrested 13 men with suspected links to the Taliban, Granai said.

The area is located about 25 miles north of the provincial capital of Kandahar, in the Shah Wali Kot district, where the arrested Taliban suspects are being questioned, he said.

Shah Wali Kot is about 85 miles southwest of the Dai

Chupan mountains, the scene of intense fighting earlier this month between coalition forces and Taliban insurgents. More than 100 Taliban were reported killed in about nine days of battles in the rugged region of Zabul province. One U.S. special operations soldier and an unknown number of Afghan troops also died in the fighting.

Southern and eastern Afghanistan, along the border with Pakistan, have been the most active fronts in the fight against the Taliban.

Afghan authorities allege that al-Qaida, Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami fighters are staging their operations from Pakistani territory. Pakistan denies the charge.

Thousands of foreign, mainly American, troops are in the country searching for Taliban and al-Qaida fugitives.

Attacks kill five Afghan soldiers

Recent attacks from suspected Taliban insurgents pouring Afghanistan from Pakistan highlighted the security challenges in America's other war.

- Kandahar** — Insurgents ambushed Afghan soldiers, killing five.
- Shkin** — U.S. soldier suffered a gunshot wound to the leg during a firefight with five insurgents near a coalition base.
- Bari Kowt** — U.S. soldier was shot in the forearm near coalition base.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Baboons used for test in preemie research

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Tiny baby baboons are part of an experiment by San Antonio researchers in tests of a technique that might better protect the lungs of the millions of infants who are born premature around the world each year.

Researchers at Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research are testing whether gentle air pressure, rather than tracheal tubes and ventilators, is enough to help preemies' lungs function. The technique — called CPAP, for continuous positive airway pressure — uses nostril clips rather than invasive ventilator tubes that can damage fragile lung tissue.

The device delivers warmed and humidified air into the upper respiratory passages with enough pressure to keep immature lungs from collapsing. This allows the baby to control his or her own breathing.

Schools accused of encouraging dropouts

HOUSTON (AP) — Crystal Gonzalez, 17, gave up on high school earlier this year. She never made it past ninth grade.

"She left a system that doesn't consider her a dropout since she is working toward a General Educational Development certificate. Some say Texas schools are nudging out low performing students.

"The dropouts become absolutely necessary because what they are trying to do is get the (test) numbers up, not improve the education of the children," Rice University researcher Linda McNeil said.

It's called a "leaver" code system and it's used to disguise dropout rates, said Maria Robledo Montecel, San Antonio-based director of the Intercultural Development Research Association.

Mother pleads for son's killer not to be released

HOUSTON (AP) — State parole officials were to hear on Monday from those who oppose the parole of a 29-year-old man who participated with nine others in a fatal gay-bashing 12 years ago on a Houston street.

Police at first had no leads in the 1991 killing, but the case was solved quickly when one man confessed and named the others. An autopsy report concluded that although 27-year-old Paul Broussard suffered multiple injuries, he died of a knife wound. Police said Jon Buice, who was 17 at the time, wielded the knife.

Buice, serving a 45-year sentence for his role in Broussard's murder, becomes eligible for parole this month.

Broussard's mother, Nancy Rodriguez, traveled from Georgia to ask state parole officials Monday to keep her son's chief assailant locked up at least five more years.

"He should stay there and be held accountable," Rodriguez said. "He committed a really horrible crime."

A new Texas law took effect this month allowing the board to postpone an inmate's next parole consideration for up to five years. Under the old law, cases came up for review in at least three years.

In a meeting Sunday with reporters, Rodriguez was flanked by crime victims advocates Andy Kahan, of the mayor's office, and Dianne Clements, president of Justice for All.

Rodriguez recalled her son's kindness and how he sent her flowers for her birthday shortly before being attacked on a Montrose sidewalk by Buice and nine other young men.

Buice's father, Jim Buice — with

the improbable support of a local rights advocate, Ray Hill — said he will ask the three-member parole board for mercy.

He said his son never hated anyone, was drunk at the time of the attack, feels deep remorse and has changed his life in prison, earning associate degrees in business and accounting, a bachelor's degree in psychology.

"What about Paul?" Rodriguez asked. "He was an honor student, an Eagle Scout. He was going back to his master's degree."

Jim Buice said: "I know my son's life in view of what he did that night."

Rodriguez said this will be at least 16th parole hearing she has attended, concerning those convicted in the case. At that time, she said, she writes letters and makes phone calls in hopes of preventing her son's killers from being released.

Kahan and Clements produced letters from several organizations asking the board to set back Buice's parole eligibility five years.

Hill disagrees. "I know all of the people," he said of the 10 convicted in the case. "There is genuine remorse about what they did."

Hill, 62, has also recommended Buice take over The Prison Show, which he hosts on KPFT radio. The show gives inmates' relatives a forum to send loved ones in prison news about their family.

Two other defendants, Jaime Javier Aguirre, are serving 15-year sentences and also are eligible for parole in the case.

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