

Afghan explosion kills seven U.S. soldiers, one of the heaviest tolls since war began

By Stephen Graham
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL, Afghanistan — An explosion at a weapons cache in Kabul killed seven U.S. soldiers and wounded three more Thursday, in one of the deadliest incidents since U.S. forces deployed in Afghanistan. The U.S. Central Command also said an American soldier was missing.

An Afghan interpreter also was wounded by the 3 p.m. explosion near the city of Ghazni, 60 miles southwest of the capital, Kabul. The soldiers were working around a weapons cache when the blast happened.

Centcom spokesman Capt. Bruce Frame said the cause had yet to be determined in the blast, among the most damaging blows to American troops since they deployed in Afghanistan more than two years ago.

The Taliban were driven from power but sporadic fighting has continued. Earlier this month, the U.S. death toll reached 100. Sixteen of those deaths occurred in combat — including seven when two helicopters took enemy fire in March, 2002.

The toll includes deaths in other areas of Operation Enduring Freedom, such as a helicopter crash in the Philippines nearly two years ago that killed 10 American soldiers — the deadliest in the operation. Seven soldiers were also killed on Jan. 9, 2002 when their tanker plane slammed into a mountain in Pakistan.

The United States provides 9,000 of the 11,000-member coalition troops stationed in Afghanistan. The Army is preparing a spring offensive against Taliban and al-Qaida holdouts amid concern that operations in Afghanistan are not as effective in breaking up terrorist networks as they had hoped.

Separately, investigators sifted through evidence Thursday from suicide bombings that killed British and Canadian soldiers in Kabul the two previous days. The ousted Taliban regime has claimed responsibility for both blasts.

The cause of Thursday's weapons cache blast was not immediately known. The wounded soldiers were evacuated



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

to a hospital at Bagram Air Base, headquarters for U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan.

The names of the victims were being withheld pending notification of relatives.

Troops at Camp Souter, the British base in eastern Kabul, held a memorial ceremony Thursday for the soldier killed the day before by a suicide bomber. The victim was identified as Pvt. Jonathan Kitulagoda, 23, from Plymouth in southwest England.

Commanders and diplomats joined about 150 soldiers to hear readings, prayers and tributes from Kitulagoda's friends in a

private gathering, said Capt. Tom Smith, spokesman for the 300-strong British contingent. Kitulagoda's body likely will be flown home next week, he said.

Kitulagoda was killed when a suicide bomber detonated a yellow-and-white taxi next to an open-topped British Land Rover jeep. Four other British soldiers were wounded. The attack came a day after a Canadian soldier was killed in a similar suicide attack.

Investigators pored over evidence from the two suicide bombings. Afghan police said they identified the original owner of the taxi.

"We have a name and an address," said Mohammed Haroon Asefi, a senior police commander at the Interior Ministry. He said no one had been arrested and he refused to release any other details.

Kabul police boosted security in the city in response to the attacks. Officials said they had more uniformed men on the sidewalks, more patrol cars on the roads and extra undercover officers moving among the city's 3 million residents.

Top 10

Continued from page 1

grades and extra curricular activities, his home should be here in Aggieland, Lane said.

For the 2001-2002 school year, more than 19,200 admission applications from high school seniors were sent to A&M, while only 6,400 freshmen were accepted for the 2001-02 year. In 2001, more than half of the entering freshmen were top 10 percent.

Ashley said 4 percent of admissions are set aside for out-of-state students and 1 percent for international students. This leaves 95 percent open to Texas residents.

"In one way, I think it discredits all of the other essential elements necessary in becoming a strong college student, namely extracurricular activities," said junior management major Nazer Taqvi, a student who was in the top 10 percent in high school. "Obviously, the system isn't perfect."

Taqvi said he believes the top 10 percent rule establishes a standard that may be considered discriminatory, but surely serves its purpose in a simple, straightforward manner.

"It is a policy that will add to the traditions at a school such as Texas A&M, but may or may not have the same effect on our entering classes' admissions profile," Taqvi said.

Leaders

Continued from page 1

Houston, said all members of the European Union legislation to abolish the death penalty in their countries.

"I know of no solid evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent to crime," Simonneau said.

David Elizondo, a sophomore in the European Certificate program, said he attended the event for a project and enjoyed the program.

"I think that the most interesting aspect of evening was the history of the death penalty," Elizondo said. "I want to use my tutelage to get a degree in political science."

Questions from the audience included concerns regarding the extradition of suspected criminals to European Union countries, the United States when the suspect could receive the death penalty. Simonneau said that at this time, European Union countries are, for the most part, against extradition.

"If it were up to me, it would be against extradition," Simonneau said.

ATTENTION ALL AGS WITH A BRAIN!!!
THE NEW HOME OF \$1 DRINKS PRESENTS...

\$1 DOMESTIC BEERS
\$1 QUESOS

TO CELEBRATE SUPER BOWL SUNDAY!

REDEEM THIS COUPON ON SUPER BOWL SUNDAY TO GET

FLAT SCREENS
LEATHER COUCHES

20 TV'S
A FAT DISCOUNT
A GREAT TIME

BIG SCREENS
PRETTY WAITRESSES

CALL AND RESERVE YOUR SEAT NOW!
AT THE HOME OF \$1 DRINKS

Margaritas **ROCKS**



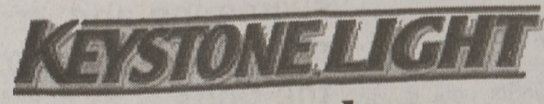
680-0600



BEVERAGE OASIS

SUPER SPECIALS

Beer



30-pack
12-oz Cans
\$10.99



24-pack
12-oz Cans
\$8.99



24-pack
12-oz Cans
\$14.99



24-pack
12-oz Cans
\$14.99

SPIRITS



Jose Cuervo Especial
80° Tequila

750 mL -	\$15.00
1 L -	\$19.00
1.75 L -	\$34.00

Crown Royal
80° Canadian Whiskey



750 mL -	\$20.00
1 L -	\$27.00
1.75 L -	\$43.00

*** Prices Good Through January 31, 2004 ***

700 University Dr. E. Ste 202B
Next to Wing Stop in the Golden Coral Shopping Center

#1 Choice for over 20 years
SPRING BREAK
CANCUN
ACAPULCO
LOS CABOS
BRECKENRIDGE
VAIL BEAVER CREEK
KEYSTONE & HILL
1-800-BEACH-BO
www.universitybeachclub.com

WISE MOVE

THE BATTALION
Classifieds
To place an ad, phone
845-0569

4.0 & Go
Feb 1st - Feb 5th
Acct 230
Tue 9p, Wed 9p
Biol 113
Tue 9p
Biol 114
Tue 7p
Chem 101
Mon 9p, Tue 11p, Thu 6p
Chem 102
Mon 11p, Tue 9p, Wed 5p
Chem 107
Tue 6p, Wed 6p
Chem 228
Mon 7p, Tue 10p, Wed 7p
Finc 309
Mon 7p, Tue 7p
Finc 341
Mon 7p, Tue 7p
Math 142
Mon 5p, Tue 7p, Wed 11p
Mgmt 209
Thu 5p
Phys 218
Mon 7p, Tue 5p, Thu 10p
Tickets On Sale Mon. 4:30p
Bookmark Us Online At:
www.4.0andGo.com