

Beat: Miscellaneous

`Powerful` bomb kills 3 British soldiers in southern Afghanistan

-, 01.05.2013, 21:40 Time

USPA News - Three British soldiers were killed Tuesday and six others were injured when their armored vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan, Britain's Ministry of Defense said on Wednesday. It raises the number of British troops killed in Afghanistan since 2001 to 444, six of them so far this year.

The attack happened on Tuesday when a Mastiff armored vehicle drove over an improvised explosive device (IED) while on a routine patrol along Route 611 between Forward Operating Base Ouellette and Patrol Base Lashkar Gah Durai in Nahr-e-Saraj District of Helmand province, located in Afghanistan's volatile south. It is the first time that a roadside bomb killed British soldiers inside a Mastiff vehicle, indicating it was a powerful explosion. Major Richard Morgan, a spokesman for Task Force Helmand, said three British soldiers were immediately airlifted to the Military Hospital at Camp Bastion but could not be saved. "Their deaths come as a great loss to all those serving in Task Force Helmand," he said. "Our thoughts and prayers are extended to their family and friends at this difficult time." The casualties were identified as Corporal William Thomas Savage, Fusilier Samuel Flint, and Private Robert Murray Hetherington. Savage and Flint were both from The Royal Highland Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment Of Scotland (2 SCOTS) while Hetherington was from 51st Highland, 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment Of Scotland (7 SCOTS). "I was deeply saddened to learn of the deaths of these soldiers, each highly praised and respected by their colleagues and commanders," said UK Defense Secretary Philip Hammond. "It is clear from the tributes paid to them that they were exceptional men who served their country with distinction. My thoughts go out to the families and friends of these brave men at this very difficult time." A defense ministry spokesman, who did not give his name, said six other British soldiers were injured in the explosion, but neither their conditions nor identities were made public. "Our thoughts are with the families who have lost loved ones in this incident, which underlines the threats faced by our personnel as they continue to hand over security operations to their Afghan counterparts ahead of UK combat operations concluding by the end of next year," the spokesman said. He added: "Security in Helmand, where most UK forces are based, is steadily improving with Afghan forces already responsible for the bulk of the province - but the environment in which our troops operate remains risky and dangerous, including the threat of improvised explosive devices and insurgent attack. We will continue to do all we can to minimize these risks but they can never be removed entirely." The latest deaths raise the number of coalition troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year to 42, including six British service members. A total of 402 ISAF troops were killed in Afghanistan in 2012, down from 566 fatalities in 2011 and 711 in 2010. A majority of the fallen troops were American and were killed in the country's south, which is plagued by IED attacks on troops and civilians. There are currently more than 100,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan, including some 68,000 U.S. troops and 9,000 British soldiers. Approximately 3,800 British soldiers are expected to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2013, with all foreign combat troops due to leave by the end of 2014.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-892/powerful-bomb-kills-3-british-soldiers-in-southern-afghanistan.html>

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