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Five Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan

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Five Australian soldiers have been killed in the south of Afghanistan as attacks by Afghan army soldiers and police on foreign troops increase.

Australian Vice Chief of the Defense Force Air Marshal Mark Binskin said on Wednesday that an Afghan soldier opened fire on a group of Australian troops in the southern district of Tarin Kowt, killing three of them.

Two Australian soldiers were also killed when their helicopter crashed in the southern province of Helmand on the same day.

On Thursday, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard said, “This is a very big toll... This is our single worst day in Afghanistan.”

“Indeed this is the most lost in combat since the days of the Vietnam War,” Gillard stated.

Australia has about 1,500 troops in Afghanistan. A total of 38 Australian troops have been killed since the US-led invasion of the country in 2001.

Recently, the so-called insider attacks by Afghan soldiers on US-led foreign troops in Afghanistan have increased.

Earlier in August, six US soldiers were killed in a series of such attacks in a single day.

US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has expressed deep concern about the rise in the insider attacks.