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Bomber at CIA base was a double agent, a news report

The suicide bomber who killed eight people inside a CIA base in Afghanistan claimed to have information about Osama bin Laden's second-in-command, and was being recruited as a double agent to infiltrate Al Qaeda, a former senior U.S. intelligence official and a foreign government official confirmed Monday.

The bombing killed seven CIA employees _ four officers and three contracted security guards _ and a Jordanian intelligence officer ,Ali bin Zaid, according to a second former U.S. intelligence official .

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the incident.

The former senior intelligence official and the foreign official said the bomber was Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, a 36-year-old doctor from Zarqa, Jordan, who had been recruited by Jordanian intelligence .

Zarqa is the hometown of slain Al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. NBC News first reported the bomber's identity. He was arrested more than a year ago by Jordanian intelligence and was thought to have been persuaded to support U.S. and Jordanian efforts against al-Qaida, according to the NBC report. He was invited to Camp Chapman ,a tightly secured CIA forward base in Khost province on the fractious Afghan-Pakistan frontier, because he was offering urgent information to track down Ayman al-Zawahri, Osama bin Laden's right-hand man.The CIA declined to comment on the report.

Hajj Yacoub, a self-proclaimed spokesman for the Taliban in Pakistan, identified the bomber on Muslim militant Web sites as Hammam Khalil Mohammed, also known as Abu-Dujana al-Khurasani. There was no independent confirmation of Yacoub's statement. Al-Balawi was not searched for bombs when he got onto Camp Chapman, according to both former officials and a current intelligence official.

He detonated the explosive shortly after his debriefing began, according to one of the former intelligence officials. In addition to the eight dead, there were at least six wounded, according to the CIA.

The bodies of seven CIA employees arrived Monday at Dover Air Force Base in a small private ceremony attended by CIA Director Leon Panetta, other agency and national security officials, and friends and family.

The former senior intelligence official said one of the big unanswered questions is why so many people were present for the debriefing _ the interview of the source _ when the explosive was detonated.

A half-dozen former CIA officers told the media persons that in most cases, only one or two agency officers would typically meet with a possible informant along with an interpreter. Such small meetings would normally be used to limit the danger and the possible exposure of the identities of both officers and informants. An online jihadist magazine in September 2009 posted an interview with al-Balawi, according to SITE Monitoring Service, a terrorist watch group that reads and translates messages on extremist forums .

SITE said on Monday that al-Balawi used his pseudonym _ identified as Khorsani _ in the postings, describing how he rose through the ranks of online jihadist forums. He said he went to Afghanistan to fight, and he exhorted others to do violence. "No words are more eloquent than those proven by acts, so that if that Muslim survives, he will be one who proves his words with acts .

If he dies in the Cause of Allah, he will grant his words glory that will be permanent marks on the path to guide to jihad, with permission from Allah," al-Balawi wrote, according to SITE's translation.

A Jordanian government official, who was not authorized to speak to the press, said the Jordanian government has no connection to the bomber. The official said the Jordanian government had not verified whether the bomber was Jordanian.

The Taliban's Yacoub said the Jordanian intelligence officer, bin Zaid, was helping the CIA recruit agents to spy on al-Qaida in Afghanistan .

Bin Zaid allegedly recruited the suicide bomber. Jordan's state news agency Petra identified bin Zaid as an army officer on a humanitarian mission in Afghanistan. It said he was killed Wednesday evening "as a martyr while performing the sacred duty of the Jordanian forces in Afghanistan." It did not provide other details.

The Jordanian military released a brief statement acknowledging bin Zaid had been killed in Afghanistan, but it did not mention he was working with Jordanian intelligence or cooperating with the CIA .

The death of bin Zaid underscored the close relationship between the Jordanian intelligence service and the CIA in the U.S. global war on terrorism.

Jordan is known to have acted as a proxy jailer for the CIA in 2004 ,when Jordanian intelligence officers interrogated several al-Qaida militants who were flown in on rendition flights from Guantanamo Bay.

A key U.S. ally in the Mideast, Jordan also contributed valuable intelligence data to the United States, which helped track down the former Al Qaeda in Iraq leader, Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi ,in 2006. Al-Zarqawi was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Iraq in June that year.