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Seven civilians killed by roadside bomb in southern Afghanistan

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Kabul - Seven Afghan civilians were killed on Friday when the vehicle they were driving in was blown up by a roadside bomb in the southern province of Zabul, a local official said.

The men, all drivers, had been stopped by suspected Taliban on Thursday on charges of working for NATO-led troops in the southern region, Mohammad Jan Rasoulyar, spokesman for the provincial governor said.

Their vehicle was struck by a remote-controlled bomb after they were released and were en route to the provincial capital, he said.

It was not immediately known if the men were the prime target of the attack or the vehicle accidentally hit the bomb. No group claimed responsibility for the bombing, which bore the hallmark of Taliban militants.

The insurgents rely heavily on use of roadside bombs as part of their nine-year-insurgency against Afghan government and around 150,000 international troops currently based in Afghanistan.

Civilians often fall victim to such homemade bombs that are aimed at the combined forces.

At least 2,400 civilians were killed in Afghan violence in the first nine months of last year, according to a United Nations report. Most of the casualties were caused by Taliban bombings.