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The New York Times

Suicide Bomber Kills an Afghan Police Chief

By ALISSA J. RUBIN

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A suicide bomber jumped on the police chief of Kunduz Province on Thursday as he patrolled just 150 feet from his headquarters, killing him and two other officers, Afghan officials said.

The governor of Kunduz, Mohammad Anwar Jigdalak, confirmed the attack, which also wounded the deputy police chief and seven others, including two civilians, in the city of Kunduz, the provincial capital.

The province, in the north, has increasingly been the scene of trouble over the past 18 months, as the [Taliban](#) have regained ground and various armed groups battle for control of smuggling routes, including for narcotics and arms that are shipped across the border to Tajikistan.

The police chief, Gen. Abdul Rahman Saidkhaili, was a controversial figure. An ethnic Tajik and a former commander of the anti-Taliban [Northern Alliance](#), he was seen by a number of local Pashtuns as someone who unfairly discriminated against them because of their ethnicity. The Taliban are mostly Pashtun.

As recently as the end of January, General Saidkhaili proclaimed the province cleared of Taliban fighters, but three weeks later, on Feb. 21, a Taliban suicide attack at the registry office in a district center killed 31 people.

Such is the lingering Taliban threat that the mullah who leads the provincial religious council refused to publicly condemn the attack that killed General Saidkhaili because he feared that the insurgents would go after him.

“If I talk to you about the suicide attack according to whether it is permitted under Islam and Shariah law, I will not live through the night,” said Mullah Faiz Mohammed, the leader of the Ulema Council. “You know better than me what will happen, because the Taliban will kill us for giving comments about such things.”

The precarious security situation in the province was also demonstrated Thursday when German soldiers patrolling as part of the [NATO](#) force came under fire in Chardara, a heavily Pashtun district west of Kunduz.

The Germans returned fire in the direction of a house where they believed the fire had originated, seriously wounding two women, one of whom died a few hours later, said Abdul Moman Omarkhail, the district governor.

In the southern province of Kandahar, the Taliban carried out an attack intended to prevent people from taking part in a cash-for-work program run by the government and NATO troops.

The insurgents kidnapped eight workers involved in the program and detained them briefly, cutting off the ears of the four eldest people.

The eight workers were refugees from northern [Afghanistan](#) who lived in a camp for the internally displaced, said Niaz Mohammed Sarhadi, the governor of the Zheri District.

“They are poor people,” he said. “They have no lands or gardens for income.” They had accepted work for \$10 a day.

“We tried to see them, but they were really scared by the Taliban and would not” talk to the police, Mr. Sarhadi said.