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The Associated Press

Taliban seize half of east Afghan district, kill 3

05/25/2011

KABUL - Taliban fighters captured a government building on Wednesday in a mountainous region in eastern Afghanistan, seizing control of half of the remote district and leaving at least three police officers dead, officials said.

The assault took place in Duab district of Nuristan province, where government forces have been battling insurgents off and on for weeks near the border with Pakistan.

The provincial governor, Jamaludin Badar, told the reporter that the Taliban overran the district compound using heavy weaponry like mortars and rocket-propelled grenades against the lightly armed Afghan police.

No Afghan military or Nato forces patrol Nuristan, where intense fighting continued on Wednesday.

Eight Taliban fighters have been killed in the last several days of fighting there, Badar said. He said the Taliban now controlled the western part of Duab district.

The Taliban and other insurgent groups control large swaths of Nuristan, Kunar and other northeastern provinces near the Pakistani border. Insurgents also have safe havens in Pakistan's neighbouring lawless tribal regions and regularly cross the border into Afghanistan to attack Nato troops.

In addition to the latest seizure in Duab district, the Taliban also control the tiny capital of Nuristan's rugged Waygal district, which they overran with more than 300 fighters on March 29. The insurgents there raised the white flag of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan - as the country was known when it was under Taliban control before the 2001 US invasion.

On May 11, an Afghan military helicopter crashed as it ferried reinforcements to stop hundreds of Taliban fighters assaulting four outposts just south of Nuristan's capital Parun.

Near the capital Kabul, the Taliban shot a boys high school principal to death in Logar province. Taliban fighters on motorcycles cut off the principal's car on his way home from school on Tuesday afternoon and shot him to death in front of his teenage son, provincial police chief Gulam Sakhi Roghlewanai said.

Roghlewanai did not know the motive for the shooting.

"The Taliban and Al Qaida - they are against the government. It's clear," the police chief said.

Meanwhile, Nato said another service member died on Wednesday in a bomb attack in northern Afghanistan.