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Reuters

Suicide bomb kills Afghan police commander, 5 others

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A suicide bomber killed a district police chief from restive eastern Kunar province and at least five other people in an attack at the gate of a mosque after Friday prayers, the provincial police commander said.

The attack is the latest in a string of assassinations of senior government and security figures. The most high-profile targets over the last year include former President and senior peace envoy Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Wali Karzai, the powerful half-brother of President Hamid Karzai.

"The Ghaziabad police chief, a member of (intelligence service) the national directorate of security, two policemen and two civilians were killed. Nine have been wounded," said Kunar provincial police chief Hewaz Mohammad Nazari.

In a text message, the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack and claimed they killed the Ghaziabad police chief and six of his bodyguards.

It was an unusual claim, because religion is at the core of the Taliban's ideology and they have in the past denied any role in attacks on religious sites, even when they appear to further their military strategy.

A mosque bombing in October 2010 killed the governor of northern Kunduz province while he was praying, and a suicide attacker struck in June at a memorial service in the same province for an assassinated police chief.

The latest bomb came three days after attacks on Shi'ite Muslim ceremonies in Kabul and northern Mazar-i-Sharif city, that killed at least 59 and wounded nearly 200.

It was the worst sectarian violence Afghanistan has seen since the fall of the Taliban.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Wednesday blamed a Pakistan-based group for Tuesday's bomb attacks, and said he would raise the matter with the Pakistan government.