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The Guardian

## Afghan soldiers killed in attacks by Taliban militants

By Jeremy Kelly

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### Suicide bombers ambush a bus and storm army recruitment centre, killing dozens

Taliban militants launched two co-ordinated attacks on the Afghan army this morning, killing at least 10 members of the country's fledgling security forces.

In the first major attack in Kabul since May, two suicide bombers ambushed an Afghan army bus on the city's eastern outskirts. Officials said they opened fire before one of suicide bomber's vests detonated when he was shot, causing one of the buses to catch fire.

The other militant was shot and killed before his device went off, said Khalil Dastyar, deputy chief of Kabul police.

Five soldiers on the bus were killed and a further nine injured.

At about the same time, four militants stormed an Afghan army recruitment centre in northern Kunduz province. Two detonated suicide vests while at least one attacker fought a gun battle inside the compound for several hours before being killed.

The dawn attack killed three Afghan soldiers and two police officers, officials said.

Provincial deputy governor, Hamdullah Danishi, said initial reports indicated the attackers were dressed in army uniforms, a common tactic by Taliban militants to get close to their targets. He said a further 20 fresh army recruits were wounded in the incident.

The attack came a day after the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, visited Kunduz, where many German troops are based, which has seen a steep rise in violence over the past two years.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for both attacks, adding in a statement they were designed to occur simultaneously.

"The purpose of [Merkel's] trip was to give morale to her soldiers. But today the successful attack is shaking the hearts of the occupation soldiers," Mujahid said.

The attack in Kabul is the first major security incident since May, when six Nato soldiers were among 18 people killed by a suicide car bomb.

The city has enjoyed relative calm, which has generally been attributed to the massive security ring enforced by the Afghan police and by the Taliban's stated intent to avoid civilian casualties.

Attacks on the foreign-trained Afghan security forces have become more common, commonly seen as a softer target than Nato forces.

The buses were on their way to the Kabul military training centre on the road which houses the main UN compound and several Nato bases.

Training the Afghan security forces is the primary mission of the international community and its key plank for the west's exit strategy from the nine-year long war, with 2010 being the deadliest for foreign troops.

The transition plan was endorsed at a Nato conference last month and again by last week's White House review of the war.