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Press TV

## Taliban claim downing US-led copter

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Taliban say they have shot down a helicopter flown by the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in northern Afghanistan, killing all the crewmembers, Press TV reports.

The militant group's spokesman Yousef Ahmadi said the militants had successfully targeted the CH-47 Chinook chopper on Friday morning in the Sayyad district of Sar-e Pol Province. He also mentioned the fatalities.

However, Afghan officials dismissed the Taliban's claim, saying the helicopter had gone down late on Thursday due to a mechanical failure. They added that the pilot had sustained injuries as a result.

On December 19, Taliban said they had targeted a US helicopter in Afghanistan's southern province of Zabul as the aircraft was trying to rescue the crewmembers of another helicopter that had crashed nearby.

In another incident, 31 US special operation troops and seven Afghan commandos were killed, when their CH-47 Chinook helicopter crashed in Afghanistan's eastern province of Wardak in the early hours of August 6. The Taliban claimed they had downed the helicopter with rocket fire, while it was taking part in an attack on a house, where militants had gathered.

According to official figures released by the website *icasualties.org*, a total of 564 foreign troops have lost their lives in the war-battered country so far this year.

Last year, nonetheless, remains the deadliest year for the foreign military forces, witnessing the occurrence of 711 such fatalities. The number eclipsed the previous record of 521 set in 2009.

The rising number of the military casualties in Afghanistan has caused widespread anger in the US and other members of the Western military alliance of NATO, undermining the public support for the Afghan war.