Two Mines Explode In South Afghanistan, Wound 3 Policemen (Afghanistan)

Kandahar (Afghanistan) - Two land mines exploded outside police stations in Afghanistan's rebel-laden southern Kandahar province Friday, seriously wounding three policemen, Kandahar police chief Mohammed Akram said.

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One of the mines exploded near a police station on the main highway that links Kandahar to the capital, Kabul. Two policemen lost their legs in that explosion near Tamak Bridge, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) northeast of Kandahar.

The second land mine exploded near a police station in Charbagh, outside Kandahar, seriously wounding another policeman, who lost his leg, Akram said. Seconds before the mine exploded a rocket slammed into the police station, damaging a wall.

The three policemen were hospitalized at the U.S. military base at Kandahar Airport, where several thousand U.S.-led coalition forces are stationed.

While no one took responsibility for the attacks, the authorities blamed Taliban fugitives and their allies among the al-Qaida network and loyalists of renegade rebel leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Warnings are routinely issued by insurgents threatening Afghans who work for the government of President Hamid Karzai.

The explosions may have been in response to a weeklong sweep throughout Kandahar province that led to the arrest of 14 suspected Taliban, Akram said.

"We know them. They were loyal to the Taliban," he said. "Probably, these people were either involved or participated in attacks against the government in recent weeks."

Insurgents have stepped up attacks in Afghanistan in recent months.

Last weekend, U.S. Special Forces killed about two dozen Taliban fighters near Spinboldak, about 90 kilometers (45 miles) southeast of Kandahar, near the border with Pakistan. The battle occurred after the U.S. convoy was attacked.

The Taliban militia was ousted from power in late 2001 for harboring al-Qaida, the terror network blamed for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

Hekmatyar, a former prime minister, heads Hezb-e-Islami, a faction which has called for attacks against foreigners in Afghanistan. Western intelligence sources say insurgents are united to destabilize Afghanistan's government.

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