Kabul - U.S. military officials on Monday confirmed that an explosion that killed an Afghan soldier and wounded five others in southern Afghanistan last week was caused by a bomb.

(05.04.2004)

Afghan officials had said Saturday's blast east of Qalat, the capital of Zabul province, some 380 kilometers (240 miles) southwest of Kabul, was probably caused by an old land mine left over from the country's two-decade-long civil war.

But U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said the vehicle carrying the soldiers was hit by an "improvised explosive device" -- military jargon for a homemade bomb.

The five wounded soldiers, including one who was seriously injured, were taken to the U.S. base in the southern city of Kandahar, Hilferty said.

Troops from the U.S.-led coalition traveling with the Afghan National Army soldiers were unhurt, he said.

Afghan forces -- from both the new U.S.-trained ANA and government-allied militias -- work closely with the 13,500-strong coalition battling Taliban-led insurgents across the south and east.

Suspected Taliban also killed two Afghan soldiers in an ambush in Zabul province on Thursday, Afghan officials said.

About 20 insurgents have been reported killed in the latest U.S. operation, Mountain Resolve. Also, 11 Afghan soldiers and two American soldiers have died in action since the operation began on March 7.

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<<< zurück zu: News