

NATO: Coalition convoy targeted in suicide attack in Kabul

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Kabul, Afghanistan :Â A suicide attacker driving an explosives-packed vehicle targeted a NATO military convoy in the Afghan capital, Kabul, on Tuesday, police and a NATO official said.

Police on the scene said casualties were expected. "It was a suicide car bomber, there are casualties but it is too early to know the extent of the damage," said Kabul deputy police chief Sayed Gulagha.

A spokesman for the NATO mission in Afghanistan, U.S. Army Col. Brian Tribus, said that a coalition convoy had been attacked. "No coalition casualties were caused by the attack," he said.

Chief of Kabul hospitals for the Ministry of Public Health, Kabir Amiri, says so far 19 people were wounded, including four children and three women.

Eyewitnesses said the attack happened during early afternoon prayers, and that people who rushed out of a nearby mosque had attacked the foreign soldiers and journalists, throwing stones at them.

The blast badly damaged at least two of the heavily armed military vehicles in the convoy. The nationality of the coalition soldiers was not immediately clear.

The explosion happened at 1.20 p.m. on the main airport road in eastern Kabul, not far from the U.S. Embassy. The blast sent a huge plume of black smoke over the city.

It happened as government employees were leaving their offices and roads were choked with vehicles as the working day is shortened during the Ramadan fasting month.

Eyewitness Ahmad Farhad said: "I saw a Toyota Corolla target the convoy of foreign forces, I saw two to three damaged vehicles and wounded victims were everywhere and there was no one to help them."

It comes a week after an audacious attack on the nation's parliament, which highlighted the ability of insurgents, who have been fighting to overthrow the Kabul government for almost 14 years, to enter the highly fortified capital to stage deadly attacks.

Also on Tuesday, a suicide attack on the police headquarters of southern Helmand province killed up to three people and wounded more than 50, including policemen, officials said.

Omar Zawak, spokesman for the governor of Helmand province, said most of the injured in the Tuesday morning attack were women and children.

Police spokesman Farid Hamad Obaid said a car packed with explosives was driven into the back wall of the police headquarters in an attempt to breach a gate. All the gunmen fled the area, he said.

Also Tuesday in eastern Paktya province, three people were killed and one wounded when their vehicle hit a roadside mine, the provincial police chief Zalmai Oryakhel said.

- AP