

Helicopter crash kills seven in Afghanistan

Tuesday, July 14 05:06 pm



Nasrat Shoib

A helicopter crashed in [Afghanistan](#) on Tuesday while transporting civilian contractors, killing six passengers and a child on the ground, NATO and local officials said.

It was not immediately clear why the helicopter crashed in the Sangin district of Helmand province, where US, British and Afghan forces are pressing assaults against [Taliban](#) strongholds in the south ahead of key elections.

"At around 9:00 am (0430 GMT) this morning, a private helicopter has crashed outside Sangin military base... we have at least six people killed," said a spokesman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

"The passengers were all civilians," he added, speaking from the biggest NATO base in southern Afghanistan at Kandahar.

Another ISAF spokesman said the aircraft was carrying civilian contractors, but their nationalities were not immediately known and it was not clear how many people were on board.

Daud Ahmadi, a spokesman for the Helmand provincial administration, said an Afghan child was killed and a man injured near the site of the crash.

Ahmadi could not give further details but "the child and the man were not part of the passengers, they were from a nearby village and killed as a result of the helicopter crash," he told AFP.

Fazul Haq, head of the local administration in Sangin, told AFP that he saw the chopper catch fire and crash.

"I was on the rooftop of a building when I saw a helicopter... Suddenly, about two kilometres from a foreign forces' base in Sangin I saw the chopper catch fire, then crash down," he said.

"Even now I can see flames and smoke," he added, speaking to AFP by telephone from the remote southern district.

A spokesman for the Taliban, which is waging an increasingly deadly insurgency against Western troops and the Afghan government, claimed that its fighters shot down the helicopter.

The Taliban frequently make claims and exaggerate their prowess in statements that are impossible to confirm.

"It was a Chinook helicopter and we brought it down," the spokesman, Yousuf Ahmadi, told AFP by telephone.

Meanwhile the administration for civil aviation in Moldova issued a statement saying a civilian Mi-26 helicopter of Moldavian aviation firm Pecotox-Air was hit Tuesday morning by a missile in Afghanistan.

The incident occurred around 8:00 am local time while the chopper was carrying out a humanitarian mission under the aegis of the international coalition in Afghanistan, it said.

On board were six team members, all Ukraine nationals. It said there were believed to be fatalities but the information was being confirmed.

The authority did not say where the helicopter came down and it was unclear if the statement was referring to the same incident as the Sangin crash, which comes a week after one British and two Canadian soldiers were killed when their Ch-146 Griffon helicopter crashed on take-off in Afghanistan.

Canadian military officials said the crash on July 6, also in the south of the country, was likely caused by mechanical failure, not enemy fire.

Afghanistan has seen a surge of violence in recent weeks, as the country prepares to go to the polls for landmark presidential and provincial council elections on August 20.

With the nearly eight-year insurgency at its deadliest, the United States has dispatched up to an extra 21,000 soldiers in a bid to stabilise the country ahead of the vote.



ALJAZEERA.NET

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Civilians die in Afghan air crash

A civilian helicopter carrying supplies to Nato-led forces has crashed in southern Afghanistan, killing six Ukrainians on board and a child on the ground, officials have said.

The helicopter erupted into flames on Tuesday in the Sangin district of Helmand province, where thousands of US, Afghan and British troops are conducting an offensive against the Taliban.

The Taliban said its fighters had shot down the helicopter with "anti-aircraft fire".

Authorities in the former Soviet republic of Moldova also said that the helicopter, owned by an aviation company there, was brought down by a missile or rocket.

But Nato officials in Kabul, the Afghan capital, refused to confirm the cause of the crash saying it was still under investigation.

Civilian deaths

"At around 9am (04:30 GMT) this morning, a private helicopter crashed outside Sangin military base ... we have at least six people killed," a spokesman for the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) said on Tuesday.

"The passengers were all civilians."

Daud Ahmadi, the spokesman for the governor of Helmand, said a six-year-old child on the ground was also killed, The Associated Press news agency reported.

About 4,000 US marines, backed by hundreds of Nato and Afghan troops, are fighting to seize areas of Helmand from the Taliban.

The province is a main bastion for Taliban fighters and the world's largest drug-producing region.

The US-led operation is the biggest by foreign troops since they removed the Taliban from power in 2001.



Thousands of US soldiers backed by Nato and Afghan forces are seeking to root out the Taliban [AFP]

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The offensive comes in advance of next month's presidential election in Afghanistan.

Afghan offensive
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The election is crucial both for Kabul and for a US administration that has identified Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan as its top foreign policy priority.

'Major challenge'

Zeina Khodr, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Kabul, said: "Security is proving to be a major challenge in the upcoming presidential elections.

"According to the interior ministry, 134 out of 364 districts in the country are deemed unsafe."

"There are more than 28,000 polling stations across Afghanistan, and according to the free and fair election foundation here, 30 per cent of those polling stations will not be secured."

Taliban fighters have stepped up their attacks in different parts of Afghanistan against foreign soldiers and the government, making July the bloodiest month for foreign troops for nearly a year.

At least 15 foreign soldiers have been killed since the start of the assault in Helmand, and two US soldiers were killed on Monday in Helmand.

Several dozen Taliban fighters have also been killed in Helmand, according to the Afghan government, but there has been no major engagement with the fighters there.

Source: Al Jazeera and agencies

Helicopter reported shot down in Afghanistan

By FISNIK ABRASHI – 2 hours ago

KABUL (AP) — A civilian helicopter ferrying humanitarian aid was shot down Tuesday in a southern Afghan province where fighting with the Taliban is raging, killing all six Ukrainian crew members and a child on the ground, officials said. Two U.S. Marines and an Italian soldier died in the latest clashes.

The transport helicopter crashed in flames in the Sangin district of Helmand province, the center of Afghanistan's opium poppy cultivation where thousands of Marines are conducting their biggest offensive since the hardline Islamic movement was ousted from power in 2001.

NATO officials in Kabul said the cause of the crash was under investigation and gave no further details.

But the civil aviation authority of the former Soviet republic of Moldova said a rocket or a missile struck the Mi-26 helicopter, owned by the Moldovan air charter company Pecotox-Airi and carrying six Ukrainians. The helicopter was ferrying humanitarian aid when the crash took place, the Moldovans said in a statement.

The Taliban posted a statement on its Web site claiming the helicopter was brought down "by anti-aircraft fire" with 37 British soldiers on board. Moldovan and British authorities said no British troops were on the helicopter. Daud Ahmadi, the spokesman for the Helmand governor, said a 6-year-old child on the ground was also killed.

The crash occurred about a mile from a British base military base, according to Fazel Haq, a senior local official. The helicopter exploded in a ball of flames, generating smoke that could be seen over a wide area.

Last week, two Canadian soldiers and one British trooper were killed in a helicopter crash in Zabul province. Officials said that crash did not appear a result of hostile fire.

Afghanistan's harsh mountainous terrain, the lack of roads and the heavy use by the Taliban of roadside bombs have prompted international military forces to rely heavily on helicopters for transportation and supply missions. A shortage of military helicopters has forced some NATO nations to contract with private companies.

The two American Marines were killed Monday in a "hostile incident" in Helmand, according to U.S. military spokeswoman Capt. Elizabeth Mathias. She released no further details.

Those deaths brought to at least 107 the number of U.S. troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year, compared with 151 in all of 2008. As of Monday, at least 660 members of the U.S. military had died in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan since the war began in 2001, according to the Defense Department. Of those, the military says 492 were killed by hostile action.

One Italian soldier was killed and three were wounded Tuesday when a roadside bomb struck their convoy about 30 miles north of the city of Farah in western Afghanistan, the Italian Defense Ministry announced. Italy has about 2,800 soldiers in Afghanistan, mostly in Kabul and the west of the country.

U.S. commanders are trying to turn the tide of the Taliban-led insurgency, which has transformed much of southern and eastern Afghanistan into no-go zones for Afghan authorities.

President Barack Obama has ordered 21,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan this year. There are about 57,000 U.S. troops currently in the country, and the number is expected to rise to at least 68,000 by the end of 2009.

Obama said Tuesday that he hopes military operations in Afghanistan can transition to a different phase after the Afghan presidential election set for Aug. 20. Obama said he is looking for an exit strategy in which the Afghan army, police, courts and government take more responsibility for the country's security.

To that end, about 4,000 U.S. Marines launched their operation July 2 in Helmand province, hoping to prevent Taliban fighters from disrupting the presidential ballot in what has been a longtime Taliban stronghold.

British forces, meanwhile, are facing a tough fight in another area of Helmand. Britain's 9,000-strong force has lost a record 15 soldiers this month — including eight in a 24-hour period, prompting a national debate over whether the conflict is still winnable.

The British Ministry of Defense announced Tuesday it was sending another 140 soldiers to Afghanistan from a British base in Cyprus to bolster the war effort.

Associated Press reporters Noor Khan in Kandahar, Maamoun Youssef in Cairo and Lara Jakes in Washington contributed to this report.

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[Print this Page](#)[Close Window](#)**Moldova helicopter on NATO contract shot down in Afghanistan**

Posted on : 2009-07-14 | Author : DPA

News Category : Asia

Chisinau - A Moldova forces helicopter working for NATO in Afghanistan was shot down Tuesday, the Infotag news agency reported. Some, but not all, of a six-man crew of Ukrainian nationals died in the morning incident, according to statement from the Chisinau air charter company Pecotox-Airi.

A missile or rocket caused the crash, according to the report.

The Mi-26 heavy helicopter and crew had been performing humanitarian aid missions, officials at Moldova's state civil aviation administration said.

Moldovan officials were not giving the helicopter's location.

The former Soviet republic Moldova has deployed some 50 men to participate in the international military forces operating in Afghanistan.

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<http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/277427,moldova-helicopter-on-nato-contract-shot-down-in-afghanistan.html>

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July 15, 2009

Helicopter Crash Kills 6 in Afghanistan

By [RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr.](#) and [TAIMOOR SHAH](#)

KABUL — A helicopter crash in Helmand Province in southern [Afghanistan](#) killed at least six civilians early Tuesday morning, and two United States [Marines](#) were killed in the same region on Monday as American and [NATO](#) troops pressed an offensive against [Taliban](#) insurgents. An Italian soldier was also reported killed in Afghanistan.

No Americans were killed in the crash of the helicopter, which had been contracted to work for the American-led military coalition, a military spokesman said. American and NATO officials said the cause of the crash was still being investigated. But officials in Moldova said the Soviet-made helicopter was Moldovan and that it had been shot down, killing a crew of six Ukrainians.

The Moldovan statement said the [Mi-26](#), a large transport and cargo helicopter, was on a humanitarian mission for NATO-led forces when it was hit, Reuters reported, and that it belonged to the Pecotox-Air aviation firm.

Lt. Cmdr. Christine Sidenstricker, an American military spokeswoman in Kabul, said, "We know there are casualties, but we're still getting reports from the incident and are unable to confirm other details."

Daoud Ahmadi, a spokesman for the Helmand governor, said he believed the helicopter was a transport aircraft and that the contract workers aboard were foreign, but not from the United States or Britain.

The helicopter was on fire as it fell from the sky and crashed in the Sangin district, northeast of the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, said Fazlul Haq, a Sangin district official.

"It was aflame and then it crashed," he said. He said that six "foreigners" aboard the helicopter were killed, and that the flaming wreckage also killed a small child on the ground and injured a farmer.

The deaths of the two marines from a "hostile incident" on Monday in Helmand were confirmed Tuesday by the United States military command, although no further details were released.

[A force of about 4,000 Marines](#) has been fighting Taliban militants in Helmand Province for the past two weeks. A total of 107 American troops have been killed in Afghanistan so far this year, according to the Defense Department.

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6 Ukrainians die on Moldovan chopper in Afghanistan

Tue Jul 14, 2009 9:24am EDT

CHISINAU, July 14 (Reuters) - Authorities in Moldova on Tuesday said a missile had shot down a Soviet-made Mi-26 helicopter in Afghanistan that belonged to an aviation company in the ex-Soviet state, killing six Ukrainians on board.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban, leading the insurgency against foreign troops and the Afghan government, said it had shot down a Chinook helicopter in southern Helmand province. It was uncertain whether the two reports referred to the same incident.

The Moldovan statement said the Mi-26, a large transport and cargo helicopter, was on a humanitarian mission for NATO-led forces when it was hit. It said the aircraft belonged to the Pectox-Air aviation firm.

The statement gave no details on where the incident had occurred, but said a six-member Ukrainian crew had died.

(Editing by Mark Trevelyan)

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Six die in copter crash, Afghan war toll mounts

Tue Jul 14, 2009 11:59am EDT

* Helicopter reported shot down by missile

* Western force now big enough to win - Mullen

* Obama talks of 'effective exit strategy'

By Peter Graff

KABUL, July 14 (Reuters) - Six Ukrainians supplying British troops in Afghanistan were killed in a helicopter crash on Tuesday and two U.S. Marines and an Italian soldier were killed in what could become the bloodiest month in the 8-year-old war.

Authorities in Moldova said the cargo helicopter, owned by an aviation firm there, was brought down by a missile. The Taliban also claimed to have shot down the chopper, a rare occurrence.

Western forces confirmed a helicopter had crashed bringing supplies to a British base at Sangin in Helmand Province and six foreigners were killed.

In Brussels, a NATO spokesman said the cause of the crash was under investigation but he could not confirm details of passengers on board.

A total of 43 foreign soldiers have already died this month as U.S. and British troops simultaneously launched the two biggest operations of the war to seize Helmand province, the Taliban's opium-producing heartland.

The highest death toll for Western forces in Afghanistan since 2001 is 46 for an entire month.

The mounting death toll among Western troops in Afghanistan is fulfilling commanders' predictions that the deployment of large-scale U.S. reinforcements would mean higher casualties.

U.S. President Barack Obama, who has identified the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan as the main threat to U.S. security, is presiding over an escalation strategy in which the number of U.S. troops will rise from 32,000 to 68,000 by the end of the year.

About 57,000 American troops are in place now, along with another 36,000 troops from Western allies. Commanders have said they expect a sharp spike in casualties as new troops move into areas held by fighters ahead of an Aug. 20 presidential election.

"UNDER-RESOURCED IN PREVIOUS YEARS"

U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, who arrived in Afghanistan on Tuesday, told troops at Bagram air base that Obama's new strategy meant there would now be enough troops to win.

"While we have under-resourced this in previous years, we're very committed to getting the resources right now for this fight," he said. "I believe to the depths of my heart and soul that we can succeed here."

In Washington, Obama, after meeting Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, said: "All of us want to see an effective exit strategy where increasingly the Afghan army, Afghan police, Afghan courts, Afghan government are taking more responsibility for their own security."

This month's dead include at least 15 British soldiers and nine U.S. Marines, from two forces mounting unprecedented operations to seize control of Helmand, Afghanistan's most violent region, half of which had been under militant control.

Helmand produces the bulk of the Afghan opium crop that supplies 90 percent of the world's heroin.

The 10,000 U.S. Marines dispatched by Obama to the province's southern half, launched Operation "Strike of the Sword" this month. The remaining similar-sized British-led task force has launched operation "Panther's Claw" to the north.

The two operations have sent thousands of troops into Taliban-held territory, advances by foreign troops on a scale unseen in Afghanistan since Soviet troops withdrew in 1989.

The British deaths this month caused shockwaves in Britain. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, under fire for denying commanders' requests to send more troops, dispatched an extra company of 140 infantry soldiers to join the 9,000 strong force in the country.

The two Marines were killed in Helmand on Monday, U.S. forces spokeswoman Captain Elizabeth Matthias said, giving no further details.

Since the launch of the U.S. and British Helmand assaults, the Taliban have also stepped up raids in other regions. One Italian soldier was killed and three others wounded by a roadside bomb in the west of the country, the Italian military said. (Additional reporting by Andrew Gray in Bagram; Sayed Salahuddin, Jonathon Burch and Hamid Shalizi in Kabul and Ismail Sameem in Kandahar; Editing by Richard Balmforth)

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Afghan Helicopter Crash Kills 7

By VOA News

14 July 2009

NATO and Afghan officials say a helicopter carrying civilian contractors crashed Tuesday in southern Afghanistan, killing all six people on board and a child on the ground.

Afghan officials say the aircraft may have been shot down, but NATO commanders say it is not clear what happened and that the cause of the crash is under investigation.

Shortly after the crash, Moldova's aviation agency said an Mi-26 helicopter on a humanitarian mission in the area was hit by a missile or a rocket, and that the crew was Ukrainian. It is unclear, however, whether it is the same helicopter that crashed.

The Taliban has claimed responsibility for shooting down the aircraft in Sangin district.

The crash came as 4,000 U.S. Marines and British and Afghan troops continue their anti-Taliban offensive in Helmand, aimed at flushing out insurgents from their traditional strongholds.

Meanwhile in Britain, thousands of people paid their respects to eight British soldiers killed in southern Afghanistan last week.

Crowds lined the streets of a small town of Wootton Bassett in southern England Tuesday, while friends and relatives of the fallen soldiers tossed flowers on the coffins draped in British flags.

In violence Tuesday, the Italian Defense Ministry said one of its soldiers was killed and three others were wounded by a roadside bomb in western Farah province.

In central Uruzgan province, another roadside bomb killed three Afghan civilians and wounded six others.

Some information for this report was provided by AFP and AP.

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