

Foreign troop deaths in Afghanistan near 600 for 2010

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KABUL: Total foreign military deaths in Afghanistan in 2010 neared 600 with the death of another service member on Sunday, an unwelcome figure that will likely weigh heavily on Western leaders amid declining support for the war.

The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said on Sunday one of its service members was killed by a homemade bomb in the south of country, bringing the total to 599 since the beginning of 2010.

With more than two months to go, 2010 is already the bloodiest for Afghan and foreign troops and civilians since the overthrow of the Taliban in late 2001. In all of 2009, a total of 521 foreign troops were killed.

The rising casualties offer little encouragement for U.S. President Barack Obama, who has promised a strategy review in December after mid-term elections a month earlier in which his Democrats face a backlash from an increasingly skeptical public.

Afghanistan will also be a major topic of discussion at a NATO summit in Lisbon next month, with European NATO members under pressure at home to justify their continued commitment.

PUBLIC DOUBTS

Disputes over the Afghan war have already brought down a Dutch government in February and a German president in May and, facing growing public doubts about the war at home, U.S. leaders have sought to lower expectations of what can be achieved.

The Netherlands formally ended its mission in August following strong public opposition to the war and earlier this month, days after four of its soldier were killed in an ambush Italy said it could begin pulling out troops from next summer.

NATO member Canada, which has suffered the third highest losses behind the United States and Britain, has announced it is ending its combat mission next year.

According to [www.icasualties.org](#), an independent website that monitors foreign troop deaths, 2,169 troops have died since 2001, more than half of those in the past two years alone.

The United States has suffered by far the most casualties, with at least 1,348 deaths. British losses total at least 341, with the remaining 480 shared among the other 44 ISAF partners.

The United States also has the largest number of troops in Afghanistan — nearly 100,000 — with other nations contributing roughly 50,000.

Nearly half of foreign troop deaths have occurred in southern Helmand province and neighboring Kandahar, where thousands of U.S. and Afghan troops launched an operation in September to disrupt strongholds in the Taliban’s heartlands.

June 2010 was the bloodiest month of the war with 103 killed as foreign forces pushed ahead with operations in Helmand and Kandahar. Another 88 were killed in July.

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