

ANDY HARVELL - TWO OTHERS FROM THE 24th STS DIE IN CH-47 SHOOT DOWN from online resources

August 6, 2011 - Tangi Valley in Wardak Province, Afghanistan - Insurgents shot down a U.S. military helicopter during fighting in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least 30 Americans, most of them belonging to the same elite unit as the Navy SEALs who killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, U.S. officials said Saturday. It was the deadliest single loss for American forces in the decade-old war against the Taliban.



The downing, in which seven Afghan commandos were also killed, was a stinging blow to the lauded, tight-knit SEAL Team 6 months after its crowning achievement. It was also a heavy setback for the U.S.-led coalition as it begins to draw down thousands of combat troops fighting what has become an increasingly costly and unpopular war.

SSgt Andy Harvell, 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Pope AAF, NC was the lone combat controller aboard the CH-47 Helicopter when it was shot down. (USAF Photo)

None of the 22 SEAL personnel killed in the crash were part of the team that killed bin Laden in a May raid in Pakistan, but they belonged to the same unit. Their deployment in the Friday night raid in which the helicopter crashed would suggest that the target was a high-ranking insurgent figure.

Special operations forces, including the SEALs and others, have been at the forefront in the stepped up strategy of taking out key insurgent leaders in targeted raids, and they will be relied on even more as regular troops pull out.

The strike is also likely to boost the morale of the Taliban in a key province that controls a strategic approach to the capital Kabul. The Taliban claimed they downed the helicopter with a rocket while it was taking part in a raid on a house where insurgents were gathered in the province of Wardak late Friday. Wreckage of the craft was strewn across the crash site, a Taliban spokesman said.

A senior U.S. administration official in Washington said it appeared the craft had been shot down. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the crash is still being investigated. The U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan has not yet provided any details on the crash or the circumstances of Friday night's operation.

"Their deaths are a reminder of the extraordinary sacrifices made by the men and women of our military and their families, including all who have served in Afghanistan," President Barack Obama said in a statement, adding that his thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those who perished.

The dead included 22 SEALs, three Air Force air controllers, seven Afghan Army troops, a dog and his handler, a civilian interpreter and the helicopter crew, according to a current U.S. official and a former U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because military officials were still notifying the families of the dead.

Note: Three Air Force air controllers listed in the previous article were actually one Combat Controller, Andy Harvell, and two PJS; Dan Zerbe and John Brown, assigned to the Two Four. \

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August 9, 2011 - Kabul, Afghanistan - A military helicopter was shot down in eastern Afghanistan, killing 31 U.S. special operation troops, most of them from the elite Navy SEALs unit that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, along with seven Afghan commandos. It was the deadliest single incident for American forces in the decade-long war.

The Taliban claimed they downed the helicopter with rocket fire while it was taking part in a raid on a house where insurgents were gathered in the province of Wardak late Friday. It said wreckage of the craft was strewn at the scene. A senior U.S. administration official in Washington said the craft was apparently shot down by insurgents. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the crash is still being investigated.

NATO confirmed the overnight crash took place and that there "was enemy activity in the area." But it said it was still investigating the cause and conducting a recovery operation at the site. It did not release details or casualty figures. "We are in the process of accessing the facts," said U.S. Air Force Capt. Justin Brockhoff, a NATO spokesman.

One current and one former U.S. official said that the dead included more than 20 Navy SEALs from SEAL Team Six, the unit that carried out the raid in Pakistan in May that killed bin Laden. They were being flown by a crew of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because families are still being notified.

President Barack Obama mourned the deaths of the American troops, saying in a statement that the crash serves as a reminder of the "extraordinary sacrifices" being made by the U.S. military and its families. He said he also mourned "the Afghans who died alongside our troops."

The death toll would surpass the worst single day loss of life for the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan since the war began in 2001 — the June 28, 2005 downing of a military helicopter in eastern Kunar province. In that incident, 16 Navy SEALs and Army special operations troops were killed when their craft was shot down while on a mission to rescue four SEALs under attack by the Taliban. Three of the SEALs being rescued were also killed and the fourth wounded. It was the highest one-day death toll for the Navy Special Warfare personnel since World War II.

With its steep mountain ranges, providing shelter for militants armed with rocket-propelled grenade launchers, eastern Afghanistan is hazardous terrain for military aircraft. Large, slow-moving air transport carriers like the CH-47 Chinook are particularly vulnerable, often forced to ease their way through sheer valleys where insurgents can achieve more level lines of fire from mountainsides.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Saturday gave the first public word of the new crash, saying in a statement that "a NATO helicopter crashed last night in Wardak province" and that 31 American special operations troops were killed. He expressed his condolences to President Barack Obama.

The helicopter was a twin-rotor Chinook, said an official at NATO headquarters in Brussels. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he was receiving his information from an Afghan officer in Kabul.

The crash took place in the Sayd Abad district of Wardak province, said a provincial government spokesman, Shahidullah Shahid. The volatile region borders the province of Kabul where the Afghan capital is located and is known for its strong Taliban presence.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said in a statement that Taliban fighters downed the helicopter during a "heavy raid" in Sayd Abad. He said NATO attacked a house in Sayd Abad where insurgent fighters were gathering Friday night. During the battle, the fighters shot down the helicopter, killing 31 Americans and seven Afghans, he said, adding that eight insurgents were killed in the fight.

This online information was added to the CCT history after publication of The Eye of the Storm – A history of Combat Control Teams.

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NATO AIRSTRIKE KILLS INSURGENTS WHO CAUSED HELICOPTER CRASH by Cheryl Pellerin,
American Forces Press Service

August 10, 2011 – Washington – Coalition forces used a precision airstrike to kill Taliban insurgents involved in the Aug. 6 downing of the helicopter carrying 30 U.S. service members and eight Afghans, the commander of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan said today.

In a briefing from his headquarters in the Afghan capital of Kabul, Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen told Pentagon reporters the action was a continuation of the original mission to dismantle the leadership of an enemy network in Wardak province's Tangi Valley.

"This does not ease our loss," Allen said. "But we must and we will continue to relentlessly pursue the enemy."

Near midnight on Aug. 8, the general said, coalition forces called in a precision airstrike with F-16s over the Chak district of Wardak province. According to details International Security Assistance Force officials released today, the strike killed Taliban leader Mullah Mohibullah and the insurgent who fired the shot -- which ISAF assessed to be a rocket-propelled grenade, Allen said -- associated with the Aug. 6 helicopter crash.

Mohibullah was a key facilitator in an insurgent attack cell led by Din Mohammad, a Taliban leader killed in a previous special operations mission, ISAF officials said. As a leader in Mohammad's network in the Tangi Valley, Mohibullah had as many as 12 Taliban fighters under his command, including potential suicide bombers.

Special operations forces received several intelligence leads and tips from local civilians and after an exhaustive manhunt, ISAF officials said, they located Mohibullah and the shooter as they were trying to flee the country.

The security force located and followed the insurgents to a wooded area in the Chak district. After making sure no civilians were in the area, the force called for the airstrike that killed Mohibullah, the shooter and several Taliban



Andrew W. Harvell, originally from Long Beach, California, lived in Southern Pines, North Carolina with his wife, according to the Fayetteville Observer.

Harvell was assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron at nearby Pope Field, where a private memorial was held Thursday.

While not as prominent as the elite SEALs, the unit that Brown belonged to is also renowned for its rigor and skill.

Hand-picked after joining the Air Force, candidates for the Special Tactics Squadron must successfully complete three years of arduous training before they can be assigned to a unit, according to retired Air Force Col. John Carney, President of the **Special Operations Warrior Foundation** a Tampa based organization. The Warrior Foundation provides full scholarship grants along with educational and family counseling to the surviving children of special operations personnel who die in operational or training missions and immediate financial assistance to severely wounded special operations personnel and their families.

"Out of 100 people who go into that rigorous training, maybe 10 of them will make it out," said Carney, who is credited with creating the special tactics units in the 1980s.

"Andy was a loving husband to his wife Krista, a caring father to his two children Hunter and Ethan and a proud United States Air Force Combat Controller.

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He was also a bad ass warrior who struck fear in the hearts of terrorists.

We will miss him forever but we take solace knowing he gave his life serving his country and fighting for what he believed was right”, said Mrs. Harvell.