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ЗЕРКАЛО МИРА

us/nato lose 3 helos in one day Officially

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Maybe the rumor is true: Sneaky Pak cheaters are putting sugar and water in fuel they are selling to US/NATO.

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By HEIDI VOGT, Associated Press Writer Heidi Vogt, Associated Press Writer – 7 mins ago
KABUL – Two helicopters collided Monday in southern Afghanistan, killing four American troops and injuring two, the military said.

A third U.S. helicopter crashed in a separate incident in the west, leaving "some dead," U.S. military spokeswoman Elizabeth Mathias said. She did not have details on how many or their nationalities.

It was unclear what caused the collision in the south. U.S. military spokesman Col. Wayne Shanks said the military had ruled out hostile fire but he did not have any other details. He said the injured had been evacuated to hospitals inside Afghanistan.

The third helicopter went down during an operation by Afghan and international forces in which a dozen militants were killed, the military said. It said the crash happened in western Afghanistan without giving a more precise location.

Mathias said hostile fire or other insurgent activity was not believed to be the cause, but they were still looking into all possibilities. Troops from the U.S., other NATO countries and Afghanistan were on board the helicopter, she said, adding that a recovery operation was under way.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmedi claimed Taliban forces shot down the helicopter in Badghis province's Darabam district. Badghis is in the northwest of the country. It was impossible to verify the claim.

This has been the deadliest year for international and U.S. forces since the 2001 invasion to oust the Taliban. Fighting spiked around the presidential vote in August, and 51 U.S. soldiers died that month — the deadliest for American forces in the eight-year war.

More than 30 American troops have died so far in October.

The deaths come as U.S. officials debate whether to send tens of thousands more troops to the country and the Afghan government scrambles to organize a Nov. 7 runoff election between President Hamid Karzai and his top challenger from an August vote that was sullied by massive ballot-rigging.

President Barack Obama's administration is hoping the runoff will produce a legitimate government. Another flawed election would cast doubt on the wisdom of sending more troops to support a weak government tainted by fraud.

On Sunday, Karzai and his rival, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, both ruled out a power-sharing deal before the runoff, saying the second round of balloting must be held as planned to bolster democracy in this war-ravaged country.

Meanwhile, security forces in Kabul fired automatic rifles into the air for a second day Monday to contain hundreds of stone-throwing university students angered over the alleged desecration of a Muslim holy book, the Quran, by U.S. troops during an operation two weeks ago in Wardak province. Firetrucks were also brought in to push back protesters with water cannons. Police said several officers were injured in the mayhem.

U.S. and Afghan authorities have denied any such desecration and insist that the Taliban are spreading the rumor to stir up public anger. The rumor has sparked similar protests in Wardak and Khost provinces.

On Sunday, the students in the capital burned Obama in effigy and chanted slogans such as "down with Americans, down with Israel" as they marched from Kabul University to the parliament building, where riot police turned them back.

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Associated Press Writers Rahim Faiez in Kabul and Noor Khan in Kandahar contributed to this report.

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