

Beat: Local

Afghan president's cousin assassinated in suicide bombing

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USPA News - Hashmat Karzai, the powerful cousin of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, was killed Tuesday when a suicide bomber arrived at his home in southern Afghanistan and blew himself up, local officials said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

The attack happened at about 10:30 a.m. local time on Tuesday when Karzai was welcoming guests at his residence in Dand district of southern Kandahar province. Karzai was killed when one of the guests, whose identity was not immediately known, blew himself up while the president's cousin went to greet him. A second person was injured. The governor's office said the gathering was taking place on the occasion of the Eid al-Fitr holiday, which marks the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. "Hashmat Karzai went to extend Eid greetings to the guest when the attacker detonated explosives which were hidden in his turban," a police official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Outgoing President Hamid Karzai, who has served as the country's leader since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in late 2001, strongly condemned his cousin's assassination. "Just like all other Afghans who are the daily targets of terrorist attacks, our family too is no exception and, as every other Afghan, we too will have to bear it," he said. Besides being the president's cousin, Karzai was also a member of the Kandahar Provincial Council and served as a key adviser in the presidential campaign of former World Bank economist Ashraf Ghani. "With immense shock, we've found out about the death of dear Hashmat Karzai. We condemn this act, of the enemies of Afghanistan, in the strongest terms," Ghani said. "His loss has left a void. He'll be missed! We'll not succumb to coward acts of the enemies of Afghanistan. Every loss of Afghans reminds us that we must stay united to overcome the challenges." There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Tuesday's attack, but it is not the first time militants have attacked Karzai's family. Ahmed Wali Karzai, the president's brother, was killed in July 2011 when he was shot dead by his bodyguard who was apparently acting on behalf of the Taliban. Other bodyguards returned fire, killing the attacker.

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