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# Abiding Threat at Camp Chapman



[TRADOC G-2 Intelligence Support Activity](#)  
[\(TRISA\)](#)

Complex Operational Environment and  
Threat Integration Directorate (CTID)





# OEA Team Threat Report



## Purpose

- To inform the Army training community of a terrorist suicide bombing at Camp Chapman, near Khost City, Afghanistan, perpetrated on 26 December 2012.
- To illustrate the power of news media coverage to confer strategic status on tactical level events.
- To explain how this most recent Camp Chapman attack fits into a pattern of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) used by threat actors throughout Khost Province.
- To emphasize the importance of continuing proactive force protection measures as Coalition Forces continue their scheduled drawdown in Afghanistan.

## Executive Summary

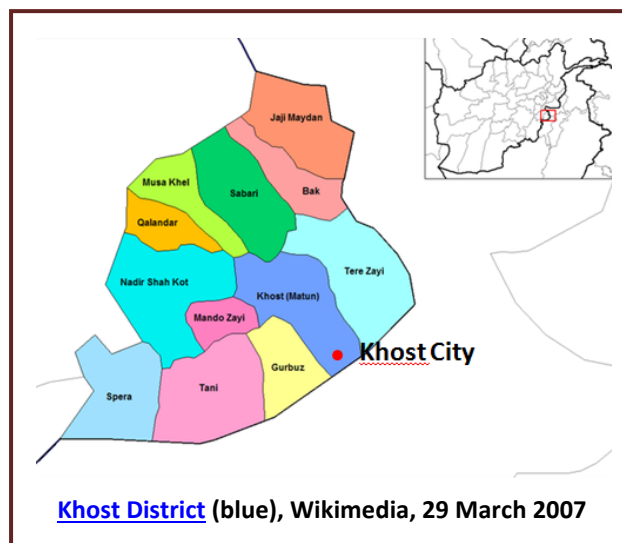
- On 26 December 2012, a suicide bomber detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) at the main entrance to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Chapman near Khost City, Afghanistan. This terrorist attack killed an Afghan security guard and 3 civilians, and wounded 7 other local nationals.
- Shortly after the incident, the Taliban issued text messages and emails claiming responsibility for the attack, and exaggerating the actual number of casualties.
- Apparently to maximize casualties, the bomber struck early in the day, just as many local nationals were reporting for work. Secondly, this incident occurred almost exactly three years to the day after the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) office at FOB Chapman suffered heavy casualties from an insider suicide attack.
- FOB Chapman is situated in one of the most dangerous regions of Afghanistan, roughly seven miles northwest of the Pakistani border.
- The 26 December incident underscores the continuing priority that commanders should assign to force protection, especially on the anniversaries of previous attacks.

Cover photo: "VBIED Explodes in Front of Checkpoint," [TRADOC G2 Handbook No. 1.07 C3, A Soldier's Primer to Terrorism TTP](#), August 2012.



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## Maps





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## Introduction

On 26 December 2012, a minivan approached the main gate on the eastern side of FOB Chapman. When Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) personnel halted the vehicle at the gate, the driver detonated an explosive device that killed himself, a security guard, two civilian Afghan drivers, and another local national walking nearby. A short time later the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.







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## Context and Background

The U.S. military has been operating in Khost Province, Afghanistan since early in 2002, shortly after forcibly removing the al-Qaeda-linked Taliban regime from power. Two forward operating bases—FOB Salerno and FOB Chapman—guard the eastern reaches of Afghanistan from enemy incursions from Pakistan. FOB Chapman is collocated with Khost Airfield, about three miles equidistant from both neighboring FOB Salerno to the north, and the provincial capital, Khost City, to the northwest. The city lies only about seven miles northwest from Khost Province's 114-mile-long portion of Afghanistan's porous border with Pakistan. FOB Chapman is named after Sergeant First Class Nathan Chapman, the first U.S. Soldier killed in action while serving in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).



FOB Chapman in relation to [Khost City](#) and FOB Salerno, Google Maps, modified



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The timing of the 26 December 2012 suicide bombing is significant in two respects. The blast occurred at the beginning of the work day, which suggests that the insurgents' intent was to inflict a maximum number of casualties on local Afghan civilians employed by the Coalition. At another level, whether or not the terrorists also intended to draw attention to a suicide bombing that occurred at FOB Chapman almost exactly three years earlier, is largely a matter of conjecture.

On 30 December 2009, also at Camp Chapman, an insider attack killed 7 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employees and the Chief of Jordan's General Intelligence Directory. The 2009 suicide bombing inflicted more casualties on the CIA than any other single incident in the previous 25 years, and caused the temporary shutdown of the CIA office in Khost City until a replacement team could be assembled and dispatched to the area. Predictably, it also made a big splash with international news agencies.

Statements issued by the Taliban in the immediate aftermath of the December 2012 incident gave no indication that the VBIED attack was timed to draw public attention to the previous suicide bombing at FOB Chapman. The Aljazeera news agency, however, was hardly alone in linking the two events, and stressing the importance of the 2009 episode involving the CIA. In general, the international news media collectively followed suit, offering little if any evidence to support a connection between two distinct events that were separated in time by three years. By portraying the 2012 attack as a sequel to the earlier suicide bombing, the media in effect conferred strategic significance on what in fact amounted to little more than an unsuccessful enemy attempt to penetrate an FOB perimeter.

Media preoccupation with Camp Chapman led some news agencies to overlook a series of attacks throughout Khost province that have trended upward over the past ten months.

- On 19 May 2012 a suicide bomber blew himself up at a police checkpoint in the Ali Sher district of Khost province, leaving thirteen people dead, including 10 civilians and three members of the ANSF.
- On 1 June 2012, a Haqqani Network suicide team penetrated the perimeter of FOB Salerno long enough to destroy the base Post Exchange and dining facility, killing seven civilian contractors and one U.S. Soldier in the process.
- On 20 June 2012, a suicide bomber killed three U.S. Soldiers and several other residents of Khost Province by detonating a van full of explosives against the wall of FOB Salerno.

The local area that includes Khost City, then, has been the target of at least three major suicide attacks in 2012, not including the 26 December incident. In August 2010, Taliban-affiliated Haqqani Network fighters, some wearing U.S. Army uniforms, launched simultaneous attacks



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against FOB Salerno and FOB Chapman. Neither of these attacks proved successful, and the Haqqani Network fighters suffered heavy casualties, including the loss of a commander.

Little doubt exists that the influence wielded by the Haqqani Network throughout the region that includes Khost City, as well as the city's close proximity to the Pakistani border, are important factors that affect the planning, timing, and frequency of individual attacks. The Haqqani Network's close ties to the Taliban and ready access to sanctuary within Pakistan's nominally governed Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have made it notorious as one of the most ruthless and cohesive adversaries confronting Coalition Forces in Afghanistan.

## **Details of the 26 December Attack on Camp Chapman**

Consistent with the base's standard operating procedure, an Afghan security officer halted a vehicle entering the eastern gate of FOB Chapman and approached it in order to confirm the driver's identity before allowing him to proceed. Apparently the police officer decided to search the minivan. After pausing briefly at the checkpoint, the minivan driver advanced a few more yards, then detonated an explosive device that killed himself, the security officer who was checking the vehicle, a civilian passerby, and two unfortunate drivers who made their living by bringing passengers to and from their daily workplaces on the FOB. The blast was strong enough to shake windows in buildings two miles away. No U.S. personnel were killed or injured in this terrorist attack, thanks mainly to the vigilance of the Afghan security guard who, at the cost of his own life, stopped the vehicle before it was able to penetrate the FOB perimeter.

A Khost resident named Habibullah told Pajhwok Afghan News that the blast occurred at 7:30 a.m., in order to achieve maximum effect as many local nationals employed by the U.S. arrived at the FOB at about that time to begin their workday. Brigadier General Abdul Qayyum Baqi, the provincial chief of police, confirmed the blast, noting that the casualties included seven wounded Afghans in addition to the four who were killed by the explosion. General Baqi's observation meshes with the Taliban spokesman's comment attributing the motivation behind the attack to a desire to kill and injure Afghans who work for the Americans and who support the regime of President Hamid Karzai.

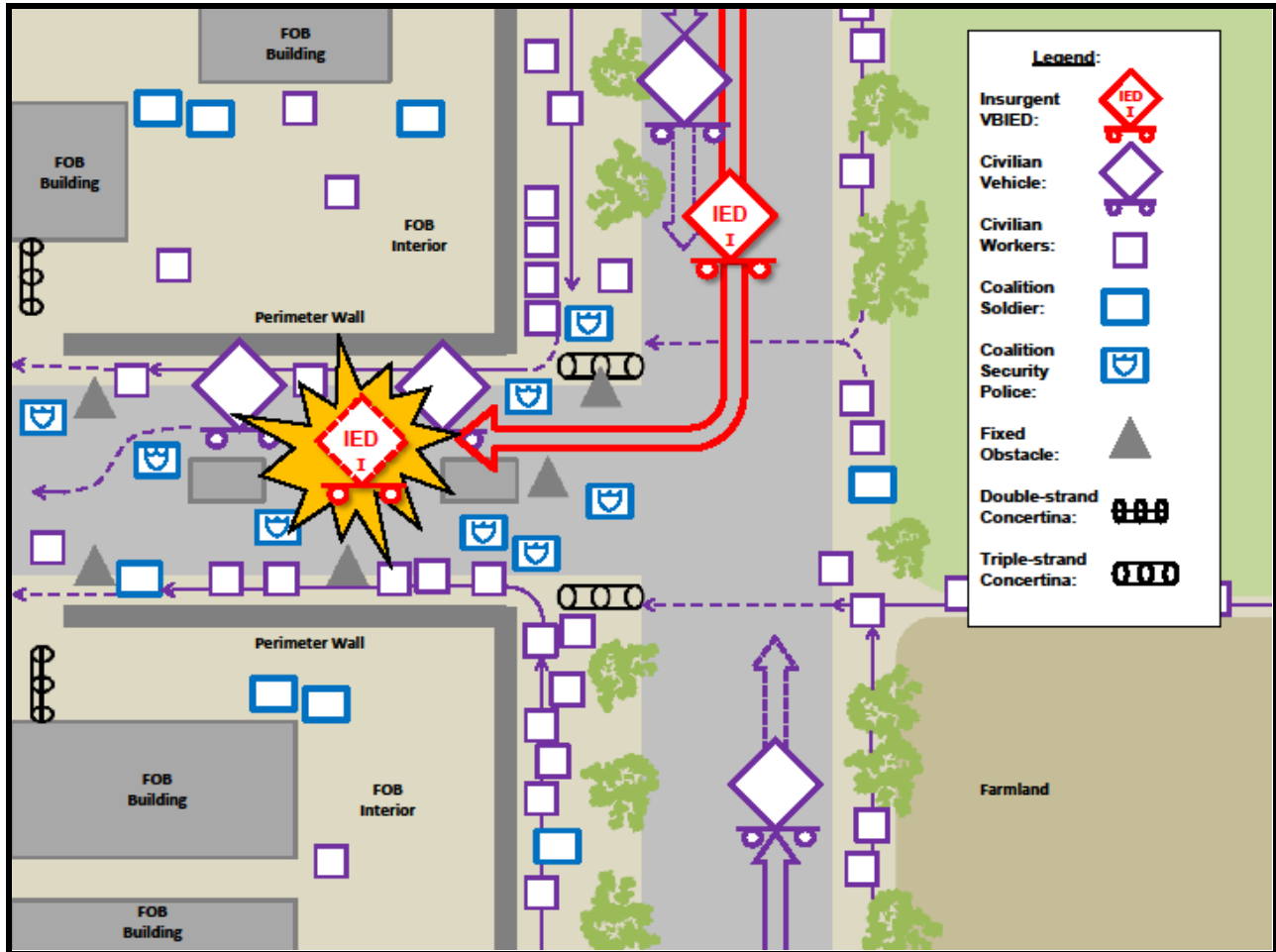
In short order the Taliban, via emails and text messages released through its (Voice of Jihad) website, assumed responsibility for the VBIED bombing. Its spokesman, who identified himself as Zabihullah Mujahid, exaggerated the casualty count in typical Taliban fashion, claiming that "as many as 100 foreign invaders and local puppets of the occupation forces" had died in the



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attack. The spokesman added that the attack had been “carried out by a mujahid named Omar from Khost who knew the area very well.”<sup>1</sup>



Graphic depiction of a close-up view of the Camp Chapman VBIED attack, 26 December 2012

*Note.* Locations are approximate and based on open source descriptions of the incident.

<sup>1</sup> Roggio, Bill. [“Taliban Suicide Bomber Attacks U.S. Base In Khost.”](#) *Long War Journal*. 26 December 2012; [“Three Afghans Killed In Suicide Attack On U.S. Base.”](#) *Agence France Presse*. 26 December 2012.





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## Analyst Assessment

Since the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), suicide bombings have occurred with a frequency that makes them almost routine in Afghanistan. The recent 26 December 2012 terrorist attack on FOB Chapman may stand out from the rest as proof of the enemy's continuing desire to reap strategic profits from violent acts it perpetrates at a tactical level. Tactically and operationally, the latest attack on Camp Chapman will have little if any impact on the outcome of the Afghan war.

Viewed from the perspective of information warfare, however, the December 2012 terrorist strike should remind commanders of the media's perennial tendency to impart strategic significance to relatively minor tactical occurrences. Published accounts of the most recent suicide bombing at FOB Chapman emphasized a perceived undiminished ability of the Taliban to attack targets almost at will in Khost more than a decade into the OEF deployment. By linking this after-Christmas VBIED attack to a suicide bombing that occurred three years ago at the same general location, the media, intentionally or not, demonstrated its power to disseminate dubious conclusions throughout a global audience.

The 26 December suicide bombing at FOB Chapman also illustrates the potential of a single individual for instilling fear in a local population, out of all proportion to the small numbers of casualties actually inflicted. Finally, the terrorist act underscores the need for deployed forces to keep their guard up as the Coalition drawdown continues, especially on the anniversaries of previous terrorist attacks.

## Training Implications

- This type of attack is an excellent example of a strike and detonate vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) depicted in the [TRADOC G2 Handbook No. 1.07 C3, A Soldier's Primer to Terrorism TTP: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures in Complex Operational Environments](#).
- No static facility is ever totally secure, especially if a threat actor is willing to die in the attack.
- A small force, or single individual, potentially can inflict serious damage, either in a physical sense, or by undermining the credibility of security forces.
- This type of suicide bombing is easily replicated, needs few role players, and requires minimal logistical support.



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## Related Products

Follow these links to view related products:

- [TRADOC G2 Handbook No. 1.07 C3](#)
- Maimana Mosque Bombing
- [Attack at PAF Base Minhas \(16 August 2012\)](#)
- [Taliban Attack on Camp Bastion: 14 September 2012](#)

See also the [Red Diamond Newsletter](#), which contains current articles on a variety of topics useful to both soldiers and civilians ranging from enemy TTP to the nature and analysis of various threat actors.

For detailed information on weapons and equipment, see the [Worldwide Equipment Guide](#).

AKO: <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/portal/index.jsp>

**Threat Products: AKO“Easy-Link”**  
Contemporary Operational Environment and Threat Integration Directorate

The screenshot shows the AKO Easy-Link web interface. On the left, there is a login section with fields for Username and Password, and a 'Login' button circled in red and labeled '1'. Below this is a 'CAC Login to AKO/DKO' section. The main content area shows a navigation tree on the left with 'TRADOC' and 'TRISA-CTID' highlighted, labeled '3'. The main pane shows a list of folders including 'C2', 'MIT Common Scenario', 'LSI Primer', 'M&SD', 'Red Team Wargaming', 'Scenarios & Studies', 'SigActs', 'Threat References', and 'TRISA-CTID', which is circled in red and labeled '4'. A search bar at the top right is labeled '2'. A list of search results is visible on the right side of the interface.

1. Login
2. “Click” Files
3. Search to:  
TRADOC G2  
TRISA-CTID
4. “Click” & Find !



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## POCs

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552-7929 (DSN)

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