Beat: News

Police officer kills German AP photographer in Afghanistan

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USPA News - A rogue Afghan police officer opened fire Friday on two women working for the Associated Press news agency, killing one of them and wounding the other, officials said on the eve of the presidential election. AP photojournalist Anja Niedringhaus, 48, from Germany, died instantly of her wounds after being shot at.

Canadian AP reporter Kathy Gannon, 60, was shot three times in the wrists and shoulders but was in stable condition after being flown to a U.S. medical facility at Bagram. The attack happened when the car that was carrying Niedringhaus, Gannon, a translator and an AP Television News freelancer arrived at the Tani district police headquarters in eastern Khost province. A police commander then walked up to the car, yelling "Allahu Akbar," and opened fire with his AK-47, AP reported. He then surrendered and was arrested. The journalists were to interview locals about Afghanistan`s presidential and provincial council elections which are set for Saturday. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who is not eligible to run for another term in Saturday`s presidential election, instructed the Interior Ministry and the Khost provincial governor to arrange an immediate transfer of Gannon to ensure she receives the best medical care possible. Karzai also ordered a full investigation into the attack, which is believed to be the first known instance of an insider attack on journalists. The presidential palace said in a statement that Karzai expressed his condolences to Niedringhaus` family and wished Gannon a quick recovery. AP Vice President and Director of Photography, Santiago Lynn, praised Niedringhaus as one of the most talented, bravest and accomplished photojournalists of her generation. "Her storytelling skill with a camera was extraordinarily effective, a reflection of her own open gaze and genuine compassion for her subjects," Lynn said. Lynn had known and worked with Niedringhaus for 22 years. "Her enthusiasm and good cheer were infectious, even in the darkest of circumstances. She consistently volunteered for the hardest assignments and was remarkably resilient in carrying them out time after time. She truly believed in the need to bear witness," he said. Niedringhaus started her career as a freelance photographer in Germany before joining the AP in 2002. She was part of an AP team that won the Pulitzer Prize in breaking news photography in 2005 for the agency`s coverage of the war in Iraq. She also received other journalistic accolades such as the Courage in Journalism award from the International Women`s Media Foundation and, from 2006 to 2007, she was awarded a Neiman Fellowship in journalism at Harvard University. JÃ¡n Kubis, the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), said he was "outraged" by Friday`s attack. "The journalists were going about their work, informing the world how Afghan citizens are exercising their right to shape a better future for themselves, their children and their country," he said. Niedringhaus is the 32nd AP staffer to give their life in pursuit of news since AP was founded in 1846, the company said.

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