

U.S. doctors killed at Afghan hospital run by Christian charity

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KABUL, Afghanistan (RNS) An Afghan security guard allegedly shot and killed three Americans at a hospital in Kabul on Thursday (April 24). The three killed were doctors, including a visiting father and son.

Another doctor and a U.S. nurse were wounded in the attack.

District Police Chief Hafiz Khan said a guard suddenly turned his weapon on the staff he was supposed to be protecting at Cure International Hospital and started shooting.

“Five doctors had entered the compound of the hospital and were walking toward the building when the guard opened fire on them,” said Kanishka Bektash Torkystani, a spokesman for the Ministry of Health. “Three foreign doctors were killed.”

Cure officials confirmed that Dr. Jerry Umanos, a pediatrician from Chicago who moved to Afghanistan in 2005, was one of the three Americans killed.

“We may never know the number of future doctors, teachers, or law enforcement officers who were given the chance to live full and healthy lives because of the work of the CURE International Hospital staff and the service and sacrifice of Jerry and his family,” Dale Brantner, Cure’s president and CEO, said in a statement.

Two of the dead were a visiting father and son, Minister of Health Soraya Dalil said. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul confirmed three Americans were killed but did not provide further information.

The White House released a statement condemning the attack, calling it “despicable and cowardly.”

“The United States continues to strongly support those in Afghanistan who abhor this violence and are working to build a peaceful, prosperous future for themselves,” National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden said in the statement.

Cure International, which describes its mission as “healing the sick and proclaiming the kingdom of God,” operates the hospital. Officials said the security guard was not an employee but part of a detail assigned to protect the hospital.

The organization did not say whether it would change practices and pull back aid workers from Afghanistan in the wake of the shooting. “Cure International remains committed to serving the Afghan people,” the group said in a statement.

Cure International said the gunman shot and wounded himself after opening fire and was initially treated at the Cure hospital before being transferred to government custody.

The Cure International Hospital specializes in child and maternity health. Cure is a non-profit organization that operates in 29 countries.