

Crash another reminder ‘of terrible tragedy of war,’ says archbishop

WASHINGTON – The deaths of 30 U.S. service members and eight Afghans in the crash of a U.S. military helicopter in Afghanistan are another “reminder of the terrible tragedy of war and its toll on all people,” said the head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services.

“No person of good will is left unmoved by this loss,” Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio said in an Aug. 8 statement.

The U.S. service members, who included about 20 Navy SEALs, along with seven Afghan soldiers and an interpreter, were killed as insurgents shot down a NATO Chinook transport helicopter early Aug. 6.

It is the single deadliest loss for U.S. troops in the 10-year-old war.

“I express my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the valiant members of the armed forces and the Afghani citizens who perished in the helicopter crash and the recent fighting in the Tangi province of Afghanistan,” Archbishop Broglio said.

He issued the statement on behalf of the archdiocese and its auxiliary bishops, priests and the Catholic communities it serves.

“As we pray for the repose of their souls and the consolation of their families, we also raise our hearts and minds to Almighty God and beg for the elusive gift of peace on earth and harmony among all people,” the archbishop said.

A military spokesman said a rocket-launched grenade brought down the helicopter that was carrying the group on a night mission. The crash remained under investigation but the spokesman said there was nothing to indicate “anything other than militant fire” brought the helicopter down.

The U.S. military archdiocese is responsible for the spiritual, pastoral and

sacramental care of the 375,000 Catholic active-duty U.S. military personnel and their 800,000 family members; 200,000 Catholics in the Reserves and National Guard; 30,000 Catholic patients in 172 Veterans Affairs hospitals; and 66,000 Catholics in government service overseas in 134 countries.