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Taliban Kills 57 Police as Afghan Province Nears Collapse

By Jason Ditz
May 30, 2016

US demands that Afghanistan withdraw much of its defensive force from the Helmand Province in favor of going on the offensive elsewhere has dramatically backfired, with provincial officials now warning that the Taliban are on the brink of capturing the entire province outright.

Around 57 police have been killed in a little over 24 hours around the outskirts of the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, as Taliban forces continue to push deeper into the area. Residents inside the city reported the sound of artillery and machine gun fire throughout the night.

Provincial Council Chief Karim Khan Atal told reporters in the capital that the remaining security forces could not handle the situation, and that in the absence of reinforcements, he believes the province will fall under Taliban control within the next 48 hours.

Afghanistan's Defense Ministry insisted that was not true, but they have repeatedly insisted they have the situation in Helmand well in hand, as the Taliban continues to seize district after district. With the capital itself now surrounded, their optimism seems less justified than ever.