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## Afghan Local Police group deserts to Taliban-led insurgents

By Sayed Salahuddin

7/4/2012

KABUL – A group of Afghan militia troops has joined the [Taliban-led insurgents](#), officials said on Wednesday, apparently the first surrender of its kind by the force created as part of a U.S. initiative to keep the militants at bay and help break the battlefield stalemate.

There were few details and conflicting estimates about the number of men who changed sides in various parts of the restive northwestern Badghis province on Tuesday evening. One Afghan security official put the number at 41.

The force is known as the Afghan Local Police (ALP) and was set up under an initiative of the United States in 2010 during the peak of the war to help NATO coalition and Afghan troops prevent the influence and spread of the insurgency.

The ALP men who surrendered in Badghis were armed with assault rifles, said Ghulam Sarwar, a local lawmaker, citing a provincial official. Interior ministry and security officials confirmed the surrenders and the accounts provided by Sarwar.

“This [surrender] may not have a big impact on the security situation of the area, but raises doubts about the loyalties of those employed by Afghan Local Police,” Sarwar said.

The Taliban confirmed that the militia group had joined its ranks and put the number of surrendered men at 86.

The ALP, composed of men from the communities that they police, was seen by some Afghans as a successful effort in the fight against the Taliban.

But dozens of the ALP members have been killed in Taliban attacks in recent months in various parts of the country. [Deadly attacks against foreign troops](#) by some men serving in the Afghan security forces have been on the rise, but there has been no report of such an act by ALP members against the NATO and U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

While there have been cases of desertions and surrender by Afghan regular police and national army troops to the Taliban, there seems to be no precedent for ALP forces to swap sides. If the numbers are confirmed, it would be the largest single such incident.

The ALP has more than 10,000 members. It covers mostly the southern and eastern regions where the Taliban are heavily active. Although it has been praised by supporters, the force's ranks include some men accused of war crimes and other abuses.