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## Rise in Death Toll of Afghan Soldiers

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According to Ministry of Defense (MoD), 830 Afghan soldiers have killed in the last seven months as a result of clash with insurgents, suicide attacks and roadside bombs planted by Taliban. That shows 31 percent increase in death toll of Afghan soldiers when compared with 568 deaths in the same period of the last year. This figure does not include the casualties suffered by the Afghan National Police (ANP), the border security force and Afghan Local Police (ALP), also known as “Arbaki.”

Earlier this year NATO said that Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are dying at five times rate of NATO soldiers. Both NATO and Ministry of Interior (MoI) have noted a surge in attacks this year. With the start of transition of security responsibilities to ANSF, it was expected that their death rate will increase. The third phase of security transition process has completed and with that, security tasks of more than half of Afghanistan is being handled by Afghan army and police and they lead most of the operations against militants. Therefore, they are losing more lives.

Keeping in view the increase in death toll of Afghan soldiers and police, it is feared that their casualties will go on increasing as the NATO will move nearer to its plan for complete withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. The insurgent claim to have

infiltrated the ANSF ranks and there have been scores of incidents where Afghan soldiers have killed their foreign counterparts. Such killing may continue even after NATO forces' withdrawal.

Over the last ten years, Afghan soldiers have given every sacrifice required to perform their responsibilities towards saving the life of people against the brutality and violence practiced by the enemies of peace, prosperity and democracy in Afghanistan – the Taliban and other groups of insurgency. Despite the severe hindrances lying ahead of ANSF, it is moving towards becoming a competent and professional force. That is indeed a timely requirement of Afghanistan.

As we will move ahead, the insurgents are expected to intensify their attacks and there will be more clashes between them and the ANSF. More fighting will result in more deaths. High dying rate may have negative moral impacts on the Afghan security forces. ANSF need moral support and encouragement from people, our government and the international community. The sacrifice of Afghan security forces for stability of Afghanistan must be acknowledged and admired at all levels.