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Dozens Killed and Thousands Displaced in Helmand Clash

24 June 2014

Officials reported that more than 40 Taliban insurgents, 35 civilians, 13 policemen and nine Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers were killed amid heavy clashes between militants and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in southern Helmand province over the past four days.

An additional 40 civilians and 40 ANSF personnel have suffered injuries.

The clashes began in Sangin district of Helmand province when hundreds of Taliban insurgents stormed police outposts, Helmand Governor's Spokesman, Omar Zwak, said on Tuesday. He added that more security forces have been deployed in Sangin to clear the area of insurgents.

Zwak said more than 800 Taliban insurgents including Arab and Pakistani insurgents have attacked the district; the clashes still continue.

According to officials, more than 2,500 families have been displaced because of heavy clashes.

Self-identified Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, confirmed the flare-up, but claimed more parts of Sangin have been captured by the Taliban.

Helmand is known to be a hotbed of militant activity and has long been the focus of NATO coalition attention. Over the past few years it has been the primary base of operations for British troops stationed in Afghanistan.

However, in preparation for the coalitions withdraw by the end of this year, Afghan security forces have taken on increased responsibility throughout Helmand as well as other restive provinces around the country.

There are about 50,000 foreign troops still based in Afghanistan, while there are roughly 350,000 active members of the Afghan security forces.