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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Taliban declares 'spring offensive'

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The Taliban has announced the launch of a spring offensive against foreign troops in Afghanistan as well as Afghan security forces and government officials.

Saturday's declaration comes a day after high-ranking US military officers predicted such a move from the group.

Dubbed the "Badar" offensive, the fresh onslaught "will target foreign forces, high-ranking officials of President Hamid Karzai's government, members of the cabinet and lawmakers, as well as the heads of foreign and local companies working for the NATO-led coalition," the Taliban said in a statement.

The statement warned Afghan citizens to stay away from public locations that could be targeted as part of Badar, "so that they will not become harmed during attacks of Mujahideen against the enemy".

"Operations will focus on attacks against military centres, places of gatherings, airbases, ammunition and logistical military convoys of the foreign invaders in all parts of the country," the statement said.

Senior US officers and western diplomats said they recently obtained credible intelligence showing that the Taliban - with the support of the al-Qaeda-linked Haqqani network - plans to conduct a series of high-profile attacks such as suicide bombings, the Associated Press news agency reported.

A Pentagon [report](#), released on Friday, painted a more positive picture of the situation on the ground saying that the US-led coalition has made "tangible progress".

[**Last week eight US soldiers and a contractor**](#) were killed after an Afghan army officer opened fired at the air force headquarters in Kabul airport.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, though authorities could not confirm its involvement.

A spokesman for the group told Al Jazeera that one of its members had been serving in the army for a long time with the aim of killing foreign forces and finally got the chance.