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## Helmand's Sangin, Marja towns under Taliban attack

1/1/2017

One Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier was killed and three others, including a district official, were wounded as clashes entered a second day on Sunday in southern Helmand province.

Haji Baz Gul, the administrative chief of Marja district, said militants were attacking the district centre and police station since Sunday night, killing and wounding some security officials.

He said residents were worried about the situation. He asked the government to send helicopters to Helmand to evacuate the injured to hospital.

Gul said no part of the district had fallen to Taliban in the ongoing fighting, but reinforcements were immediately required to push back the rebels. The troops engaged in the clashes had not visited their families in the past six months.

Brg. Gen. Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai, commander for 2015<sup>th</sup> Maiwand Military Corps, said one ANA soldier was killed and two others wounded in the fresh clashes. He said security forces were being assisted at the battleground.

Haji Marjan, head of the local council in Sangin district, said heavy clashes and attacks on the district centre and police station were underway over the past two days. He said new weapons had been seen with Taliban in the district, which would complicate the conflict.

A government official told Pajhwok Afghan News that Iran had provided new weapons to the Taliban to destabilize some parts of Afghanistan.

Abdul Hamid Akhunzada, deputy provincial council chief, scorned official claims about improvement in security situation of the country, saying no progress had been made.

He claimed militants defended areas they had captured and no progress had been made in retaking the areas.

Governor spokesman Omar Zwak confirmed clashes were ongoing in Sangin and Marja districts, denying Taliban's advance after heavy clashes. He said the Taliban did not capture new areas and would be defeated soon.

Helmand province is comprised of 13 districts and provincial capital Lashkargah. Six districts are being controlled by Taliban.

Few months back, Taliban intensified their attacks in Helmand, reaching close to the governor's house, but they were pushed back and the provincial capital was rescued.