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Civilians among 49 killed in Helmand

By Zainullah Stanikzai

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LASHKARGAH - Eight civilians, as many policemen and 33 militants have been killed in a series of incidents of violence in southern Helmand province over the past two weeks, an official said.

Another 40 civilians and 16 militants were injured during the period, police chief Col. Abdul Nabi Alham told mediemen on late Thursday. The police officials were killed in suicide attacks and roadside mine blasts, he said.

On Jan 26, four civilians were killed and 34 others, including foreigners, were wounded in a car suicide bombing in Lashkargah, the provincial capital, he said.

He said militants suffered casualties during operations involving police, Afghan and foreign troops. The security forces had defused 73030 mines and seized hundreds kilograms of opium and weapons during the period, Alham said.

The police chief also said 38 poppy growers had been arrested and their poppy crop over hundreds of acres of land destroyed during the last two weeks.

“We need an expert mine defusing squad. The police morale is high while militants becoming weaker,” Alham said.

But Taliban reject his claim, vowing to continue attacks on local and foreign forces.