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British soldier killed in southern Afghanistan

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A British soldier has been killed in southern Afghanistan, bringing the death toll for British troops to 416 since the US-led war began in 2001.

The United Kingdom Ministry of Defence announced in a statement issued on Friday that the soldier, who was from 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh, was killed by small arms fire while on a foot patrol in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province on Friday.

"He was fatally wounded and despite immediate medical attention could not be saved," the statement said, adding that his family had been notified.

The Taliban have announced that their annual "spring offensive" across Afghanistan has begun and are threatening to target US-led NATO troops and their allies.

Code-named Al-Farouq, the primary targets of the offensive will be "foreign invaders, their advisors, their contractors, all those who help them militarily and in intelligence," the Taliban militants said on their website.

As casualties have risen in Afghanistan over the past few months, public opinion in the United States and other NATO countries has begun turning against the war.

In addition, hundreds of civilians have lost their lives in US-led operations in various parts of Afghanistan over the past few months, with Afghans becoming increasingly outraged with the seemingly endless number of deadly assaults.