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## Violence in Afghanistan kills 148 in three days

By Farid Behbud

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Up to 148 people including five NATO soldiers have been killed in insurgency-hit Afghanistan since Sunday morning.

Taliban carried out an attack in the country's restive eastern region that left a NATO soldier dead on Tuesday, the military alliance confirmed.

"An International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) service member died following an insurgent attack in eastern Afghanistan today," the NATO-led ISAF said in a press release.

Another ISAF soldier was killed in similar incident in the troubled southern part of the country on Monday.

The brief ISAF statement didn't reveal the nationalities of the victims under the ISAF policy.

However, local media reported that an Australian special force member was killed in an attack in southern Uruzgan province on Monday.

Violence has been on the rise since Taliban launched annual spring offensive on May 3.

Also on Monday evening, a suicide car bomb attack on a minibus left seven passengers dead and 23 others injured in Kandahar city, the provincial capital of southern Kandahar province.

Blaming Taliban for the attack, provincial police chief General Abdul Raziq told Xinhua that the victims were all civilians.

However, a local security official told Xinhua that the minibus carried a group of Afghan special force personnel in plain clothes from a military compound to their residence.

Kandahar, the birthplace of Taliban, has seen increasing militancy despite persistent cleanup operations.

In the latest target killing, unknown gunmen shot dead an official with the intelligence agency on Sunday in Herat city, the capital of western province of Herat.

"Two unidentified gunmen riding a motorbike opened fire on Syed Ismael Qazi Zada, a senior officer with the National Directorate for Security (NDS) in Herat province, and murdered him on the spot, " spokesman of NDS in the province Syed Shir Agha told Xinhua.

The incident happened in the morning rush hour when Qazi Zada was on way to office and attackers fled after firing seven bullets on their target, he added.

Also on Sunday, a man wearing Afghan police uniform opened fire and killed three British soldiers with the ISAF in southern Helmand province.

Meanwhile, five civilians were killed and 18 others injured when a passenger bus was struck by a roadside bomb in eastern Ghazni province.

To check the Taliban-led attacks, the Afghan police and army, backed by NATO-led ISAF, kept up military pressure on insurgents across the country.

"Afghan National Police, Afghan National Army, Afghan intelligence agency and Coalition Forces launched 12 joint cleanup operations in Kabul, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Wardak, Logar and Ghazni provinces, killing 82 armed Taliban insurgents during the past 24 hours," Afghan Interior Ministry said Tuesday.

The joint forces have killed up to 132 Taliban insurgents and captured 34 others over the past two days.

Furthermore, a NATO air raid on a Haqqani militant group's shelter in Ahmadabad district of eastern Paktia province left eight militants dead, including a senior commander named Adam Khan Kochi, deputy provincial governor Abdul Rahman Mangal told Xinhua on Monday.

The Taliban-linked Haqqani network mostly operating in eastern Afghan provinces and capital Kabul was responsible for many high- profile attacks against the security forces.