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UK soldiers held on suspicion of murder

by Javed Hamim Kakar
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KABUL (*PAN*): Seven British soldiers have been arrested on suspicion of murder following an "engagement" with an insurgent in southern Afghanistan, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in London announced on Thursday.

"The Royal Military Police have today arrested seven Royal Marines on suspicion of murder. The arrests relate to an incident in Afghanistan in 2011. The incident followed an engagement with an insurgent..." a statement from MoD said.

Believed to be members of 3 Commando Brigade, the soldiers were held in connection with the incident in Helmand, where they were based. The service justice system is probing the incident that involved no civilians, according to the statement.

One of the seven detainees reportedly claimed that the insurgent was killed in violation of the *military's* strict rules of engagement. The inquiry began in recent weeks when the "code of silence" among the marines was broken by one of those who witnessed the crime.

According to a British newspaper, the Royal Marines were in Helmand last year between April and September as part of 3 Commando Brigade, which was led by Brigadier Ed Davis. They were operating in Nahr-i-Saraj and Nad Ali districts.

A spokesman for the ministry told the Guardian: "The investigation will now be taken forward and dealt with by the service justice system. These arrests demonstrate the department and the armed forces' determination to ensure UK personnel act in accordance with their rules of engagement and our standards."

As with any serious incident of this nature, the MoD said, there would be an internal review to identify lessons learned. The nature of the review would reflect the developments and, in due course, the outcome of the investigation, it added.