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360 civilians killed in Helmand in one year

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Nearly 1,170 people, most of them insurgents, were killed in separate security incidents during the ongoing Afghan calendar year in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province, an official said. Provincial police chief, Col. Abdul Nabi Ilham, gave the figure while releasing an annual report at a news conference in Lashkargah, the provincial capital, late on Thursday.

The dead included 360 civilians, 38 police and 763 armed rebels, he said, adding most of police and civilian casualties inflicted were caused by roadside bombs planted by the militants. Col. Ilham said 541 civilians and 138 insurgents had been injured and another 245 militants detained during operations since March 2012.

He added: "As result of improving police capacity, we are better performing our duties. We defused more than 3,000 landmines and seized 108 motorbikes, eight vehicles and 200 weapons."

The police chief said the crime graph had declined in the province after the arrest and referral of outlaws to judicial organs.

Foreign force kills suspect during operation: MAZAR SHARIF (AIP): NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on Friday claimed they had killed an "insurgent" during an operation in Kishindeh district of northern Balkh province yesterday. Local residents, however, said the deceased was a civilian.

"Afghan and coalition forces killed an insurgent during an operation in Kishindeh district, Balkh province, yesterday," the international force said in a statement without giving further details.

A local resident, however, told Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that the operation was conducted in Mirzai area of Kishindeh district in which a civilian was killed and another wounded. He said the victims had no links to Taliban.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, meanwhile, told Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that the combined force killed three students of a seminary, not Taliban.

Sher Jan Durrani, spokesman of Balkh police, said they had no reports of any operation in the limits of Kishindeh district, adding Mirzai village was located in the Sar-e-Pul province. ISAF claims killing Taliban commander: KABUL (AIP): ISAF on Friday (March 1) claimed combined force killed a Taliban commander during an operation in Helmand province yesterday. "Afghan and coalition forces killed Taliban leader, Sadiq, and wounded another insurgent during an operation in Nahr-e Saraj district," the NATO-led force announced in an operational update. "Sadiq was an experienced leader responsible for procuring and distributing small arms and improvised explosive devices to Taliban fighters for use in attacks against Afghan and coalition forces.

He was also involved with kidnapping government officials and Afghan National Security Force members," it said.

Separately, it said, the combined force detained a Taliban facilitator in Nawa district today. Meanwhile, a press release issued by ISAF eastern command said the combined force also detained three suspects in Gurbaz district of Khost province.

It said a weapons cache was also discovered in the same district.

There was no word by Taliban in this regard.

Security forces kill six anti-government gunmen: LASHKARGAH (AIP): Six anti-government gunmen were killed during separate clashes with security forces in Greshk and Nawa districts of Helmand province, police said Friday.

A clash took place between armed opponents and security forces in Malgir area just before noon today in which three gunmen were killed, Shah Jehan, police chief of Greshk district, told Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

He said security forces seized the dead bodies, six landmines, two motorcycles, a motorcar and arms.

In another development, three gunmen were killed after a gunbattle in Trekhnowar area of Nawa district yesterday, said Ahmad Popal, police chief of Nawa district.

He said the dead bodies of the fighters were lying at the site of the clash.

There was no word by anti-government armed groups in this regard.