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## 3 Afghan soldiers, 77 militants killed within day

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About 77 Taliban militants were killed in army operations since early Saturday, said the Afghan Defense Ministry on Sunday.

"Afghan National Army (ANA) conducted several security operations in Laghman, Ghazni and Helmand provinces over the past 24 hours, killing 77 armed militants and injuring several other militants," the ministry said in a statement.

The army had also defused 28 roadside bombs and landmines besides seizing weapons and ammunition.

Three ANA soldiers died following separate roadside bombings over the same period, the statement noted.

A surge in attacks has been witnessed in the country since the Taliban launched a yearly rebel offensive against Afghan security forces and nearly 50,000 NATO-led troops stationed in the country in mid-May.

Earlier on Sunday, one civilian was killed and two others injured when Taliban opened fire on a long-distance bus in southern Helmand province while three NATO service members were wounded in a suicide bombing on coalition forces' convoy in eastern Nangarhar province late on Saturday.

