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afgazad@gmail.com

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AFP

Violence kills 100 Afghan police every month

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Almost 2,000 Afghan police officers have been killed or injured by insurgents in the past six months as many are forced onto the frontline in the war against the Taliban, an official said Sunday.

Taliban-style bomb attacks, suicide bombings, direct clashes and military operations had killed 595 police officers and wounded another 1,345, said Zemarai Bashary, spokesman for the interior ministry.

"In the past six months 595 policemen were martyred and another 1,345 were wounded," he said.

Afghanistan's police force has long been asked to fight the spreading insurgency alongside soldiers, despite lacking the training and equipment of the army.

At the same time, the force is generally regarded by ordinary Afghans as ill-disciplined, predatory and corrupt, though a massive recruitment and training programme is boosting numbers and competence.

The United States is bankrolling the programme to build Afghanistan's army and police so they can take over responsibility for security by 2014, as pledged by President Hamid Karzai. It is spending 9.2 billion dollars in the fiscal year 2010.

The NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan has so far trained more than 136,000 Afghan soldiers and over 119,600 police, it said, and aims for 171,600 soldiers and 134,000 police by November 2011.

Building Afghanistan's security forces is pivotal to US President Barack Obama's plan to start drawing down American troops by July 2011.

The United States and NATO have around 150,000 troops in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban-led insurgency now dragging towards its 10th year.

To fill the immediate gap the interior ministry said in July it would establish the Afghan Local Police (ALP), which has raised concerns that these armed village constabularies could morph into militia groups.

Bashary said the ALP would eventually total 10,000 nationwide, comprised of armed villagers with the support of local councils and tribal elders.

They would receive three weeks' training, be paid 60 percent of a normal police salary and act purely as a defensive force against the Taliban, he said.

The Taliban presence has spread in the past year to most of the country, straining the capacity of the NATO and US military presence.