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Iran shells Afghan village over land dispute

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Kabul - Iran has fired seven mortar shells into Afghanistan following a dispute over an Afghan village in southwestern Nimruz province, an official said Wednesday.

'Today I received reports that as many as seven mortar shells were shot into Nimruz province in Kang district from the Iranian side of the border this morning,' Haji Qaasim Khedri, deputy governor of Nimruz, told dpa.

'We have not received any reports of casualties yet, and we have reported the incident to higher authorities in Kabul,' Khedri said.

Earlier this week, Iranian officials claimed an Afghan village as part of its territory. This was followed by Wednesday's shelling, Khedri said.

He said both events related to the same village, adding that the Iranian military had made 'force deployments along the border line.'

'Iranian officials sent a letter to us, saying Badichi village of the Kang district is a part of their geography but has been attached to Afghanistan for several years,' Khedri said.

Badichi, which shares borders with Iran, was wiped out by flash floods in 2005 and 2006, according to officials. The village has since been rebuilt.

Kang district is located around 30 kilometers away from Nimruz's capital Zaranj.

The deputy governor said the Afghan border police in the area were ready to defend the province in case of a serious attack.

Afghan Interior and Foreign Ministry officials were not available to comment.

Iran shares almost 1,000 kilometres of border with its eastern neighbour. Both have publicly maintained good relations, despite accusations by US and NATO military officials that Iran is assisting Taliban militants in southern and southwestern Afghanistan.

The countries' relationship turned sour in January when Iran blocked more than 2,000 oil tankers, saying the fuel was being used by NATO forces, an allegation denied by Afghan officials.