

Afghan governor says his chopper hit by rocket fire



Sat May 17, 3:06 PM ET

Taliban rockets struck a NATO helicopter carrying the governor of Afghanistan's Helmand province Saturday but the damaged chopper was able to fly out of the attack, the official said.

The British military operating in the troubled southern province confirmed that a helicopter had been forced into an emergency landing and said no one was hurt.

Governor Gulab Mangal said the helicopter had come under fire as it was about to land at Musa Qala, a small town that had been a key Taliban base and opium-trading centre until troops forced the rebels out in December.

The chopper was able to spin off to a nearby outpost of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Mangal told AFP. It was too damaged to fly out again, he said.

Helmand Task Force, part of the ISAF mission, confirmed an ISAF helicopter had made an "unscheduled landing" near Musa Qala. "We are looking at what exactly it was that made it have an emergency landing," a spokesman said.

Mangal, appointed less than three months ago, is in charge of one of the most difficult provinces in Afghanistan.

It is the centre of a huge drugs trade that finances an extremist insurgency and officials admit that Taliban control a few districts there.

British and US troops are operating in Helmand's Garmser district, on the border with Pakistan, to clear out Taliban from what a Marine official said last week was a rebel "planning, staging and logistic hub."

Mangal said Tuesday about 150 Taliban fighters and their foreign national allies had been killed in the operation in the past week.

It was the third time this month a helicopter working for the international military has come under fire from rebels, who have also made several attempts to kill provincial chiefs and even President Hamid Karzai in the past years.

Helicopters were struck in the mountainous eastern provinces of Kunar and Nuristan in the past two weeks, one attack causing insignificant injuries.

In May last year, seven NATO troops were killed when a chopper crashed in Helmand's Kajaki area. The Taliban said it had shot it down.

Copyright © 2008 [Agence France Presse](#). All rights reserved. The information contained in the AFP News report may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without the prior written authority of Agence France Presse.

Copyright © 2008 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved.

[Questions or Comments](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Copyright/IP Policy](#) - [Ad Feedback](#)