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Today date: **Dec 05, 2007**

Families flee as operation in Taliban stronghold begins

Date : Dec 05, 2007
Category : General
Sources : BNA

LASHKARGAH: Afghan and NATO forces launched a widely expected operation in the Taliban-held Musa Qala district of the volatile Helmand province on Wednesday. The sweep prompted thousands of scared families into leaving homes for safer places.

Provincial Governor Asadullah Wafa said, revealed Afghan and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) soldiers began the crackdown this morning on Taliban militants, who have been in control of the restive district for about 10 months.

Also on Wednesday, the US-led Coalition claimed killing several militants during an operation to disrupt foreign fighter and weapons facilitation networks in Garmser district of the same province. The troops attacked an individual believed to be associated with weapons smuggling operations.

During a search of several compounds in Garmser, the Coalition added, the forces killed several armed militants, who posed an imminent threat. Arms and explosives seized during the search were removed to prevent their use by extremist forces.

Helmand police chief Brig. Gen. Muhammad Hussein Andiwai confirmed the NATO-Afghan swoop in Musa Qala, a stronghold of Taliban insurgents. However, he gave no further details of the military campaign - apparently aimed at recapturing the district.

Thousands of families are preparing to flee the embattled town, according to resident Farhad, who revealed many dwellers were streaming into the neighbouring Sangin district.

With a view to avoiding the displacement of civilians, local tribal elders recently urged Afghan and foreign soldiers not to embark on an operation in the winter. Fearing the action for weeks, locals are left with no option but to shift elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Taliban denounced the launch of the swoop as a callous action. The operation would only aggravate the hardships of the people, Qari Yousaf Ahmadi said.

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 Kabul	24c/0c
 Kandahar	33c/6c
 Herat	28c/0c
 Mazar	26c/6c

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	13:30	●
	50:10	▲
	99:20	▲
	67:90	▲
	13:60	▲



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