

NATO-led Operation in Afghanistan Meets Fierce Resistance

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KABUL — Contrary to expectations, the militants have resisted the advancing Afghan and NATO-led troops in Marja district of southern Helmand province over the past five days as authorities and locals admitted Wednesday that sporadic fighting is continuing.

Taliban outfit not only in military field but also in propaganda war has been matching the well-equipped NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) inviting journalists to visit the battle ground and judge who has upper hand.

In an email sent to media on Tuesday, the militants invited media outlets to send their reporters to Marja and report the fact about the situation there.

In efforts to evict Taliban insurgents from their bastion in Maja district of Helmand province in south Afghanistan, some 15, 000 Afghan and the NATO-led troops including U.S. Marines launched the ever-biggest offensive dubbed “Moshtarak” or “Together” early Saturday.

Backed by wide propaganda and boasting, military commanders, days before launching the operation asked non-combatants to leave the area besides calling on insurgents to lay down arms and surrender.

Hundreds of families have left for safer places mostly to Helmand’s provincial capital Lashkar Gah to escape the war.

However, militants from the beginning downplayed the well- prepared assault, vowing to fight tooth and nail.

So far, over 40 people including 12 civilians and some 30 militants have been killed. However, roadside bombings and firing carried out by Taliban militants, according to NATO’s statements have left 11 NATO soldiers dead elsewhere in the southern region since storming Taliban fiefdom in Marja.

Majority of some 1,000 militants in Marja, according to local media reports, have fled to the neighboring districts and provinces.

Governor of Nimroz province Ghulam Dastgir Azad warned Tuesday that militants’ infiltration would destabilize his province.

Taliban purported spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi in talks with media via telephone from an unknown location has claimed that insurgents have killed over two dozen NATO and Afghan

soldiers besides destroying two tanks.

However, Afghan authorities rejecting the claim as mere propaganda, saying only one soldier was killed and three soldiers have sustained injuries since kicking off the operation Moshtarak.

Afghan Defense Ministry, according to local media reports confirmed that resistance is still continuing in the outskirts of Marja and Nad Ali districts.

Taliban militants largely rely on roadside bombings to deter troops' advance as their invitation email to journalists say, "The invaders are not able to come out of their ditches. Wherever they intend to move, they come under attack and face explosions of planted mines."

The deadly weapon the roadside bombings have killed and injured around two dozen police and civilians in the volatile southern region since early weekend and the Taliban vowed to further use the deadly homemade device.

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