

Video: Taliban Pushes Back Against ISIS Expansion in Afghanistan. Increased US Troops Deployed

By [South Front](#)

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ISIS has increased its efforts in order to expand its influence in Afghanistan. The local ISIS branch is believed to have about 3,000-5,000 members, including local Afghans, Pakistanis and Uzbeks.

According to available data, most of the terrorists are in the province of Nangarhar. However, cells of the terrorist group operate across the entire country.

Over the past few months, ISIS members have carried a series of terrorist attacks against government targets as well as engaged members of the Taliban in separate clashes and hit-and-run operations.

The ISIS expansion is fueled by fighters and field commanders, whom had fled Syria and Iraq where the terrorist group's self-proclaimed caliphate was recently defeated. Another factor contributing to growth of the ISIS influence is a poor humanitarian, economic and social situation in the country.

According to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the central government controls only about 56-57% of Afghanistan. About 29% of the country is contested. The rest is mostly controlled by the Taliban.

The Taliban is actively combating ISIS. On August 1, the movement carried out a large-scale operation against the terrorist group in the province of Jawzjan. According to the Taliban news agency Voice of Jihad, 153 ISIS members were killed and over 100 others were injured in the Taliban operation. 134 terrorists were captured.

A day later, the provincial authorities linked to the Kabul government said that 250 ISIS members had surrendered to the government. While these terrorists fled the Taliban operation, the MSM has already described this as a major success in the US-backed effort against ISIS.

A major part of the Afghan population dislikes intensely the ISIS ideology and its sectarian approaches. However, one of the problems of the Taliban is that the movement has not been able to improve the live conditions of the young population in the areas it controls. ISIS exploits this displeasure to recruit new members in the government-held, contested and even Taliban-held areas.

The Taliban has increased its attacks against the US-backed Kabul government aiming to strengthen its influence across the country and to gain additional support among the local population, which is in opposition to the US-led bloc and its “allies” in Kabul.

The previous ISIS attempt to entrench and expand in Afghanistan took place in 2015. Then, ISIS was exploiting its victories in Syria and Iraq to set up additional branches around the world. In 2018, the ISIS expansion in Afghanistan is based on the recent setbacks in the Middle East. However, this does not make the terrorist group less dangerous.

The complicated security situation concerns regional and global powers involved in the conflict. Thus, the administration of US President Donald Trump significantly increased the number of troops deployed in Afghanistan: from 8,500 in early 2017 to 14,000 in early 2018. The US military has also expanded its train and advice efforts to strengthen forces of the Kabul government. A number of strikes by the US air power was increased.

At the same time, Washington is attempting to stabilize the situation through negotiations with the Taliban. According to media leaks, the US wants the Taliban to find some peaceful solution with the Kabul government.

The course of the conflict has shown that the US and US-backed forces are unable to defeat the Taliban insurgency military without deployment of additional US forces and a full occupation of the country. So, the Trump administration is searching another way to declare a “victory” in the conflict – something President Trump has repeatedly promised to his supporters.

However, this situation remains unlikely. The Taliban has repeatedly stated that one of its key demands is a full withdrawal of US forces in Afghanistan.

Russia, China and as well as other Afghanistan’s neighborhoods are also concerned with the growing ISIS activity. According to experts, Beijing and Moscow, which play an important role in the region, are interested in stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan that would allow to the Kabul government, the US-led forces or the Taliban to deliver a decisive blow to ISIS.

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