

**Embassy of India
Kabul**

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SECURITY ADVISORY

• **Spring Offensive being planned by Taliban**

More than 4,000 people were killed in Afghanistan in 2006, a quarter of them were civilians, in one of the most violent year since the Taliban were ousted in 2001. The first two months of 2007 have seen reduced suicide attacks in Kabul, though Southern Afghanistan continues to reel under the onslaught of Taliban offensive. As the weather becomes warm and snow melts opening up road communication in all parts of Afghanistan, it is expected that Taliban would unleash bloody attacks on the US - led foreign troops. Media and security forces assess that 2007 would witness greater levels of violence, especially in Southern Afghanistan. Taliban has been claiming that their war preparations, especially in Southern Afghanistan and in Helmand province are complete and about 10,000 fighters were ready to take up arms when ordered.

2. Afghanistan government maintains that the Taliban fighters are being sponsored by a neighbouring country. President Karzai has said that Afghanistan has suffered for the past 30 years because of interference from its neighbors. As for the spring offensive by the Taliban, if there were no support from external sources and availability of bases/sanctuaries outside Afghanistan, an offensive would not be possible and activities terrorizing the population would not take place.

3. NATO Commanders expect Taliban insurgents to step up violence in coming weeks and USA has assured of higher troop levels in anticipation of fierce fighting. Insurgents have already resumed attacks, mainly in the South, where they had captured a major town and threatened a key hydroelectric dam. An important tactic in any offensive is expected to be suicide bombings and information indicate that Taliban have 2,000 suicide bombers ready and another 3,000 in training. NATO plans to take the initiative ahead of an anticipated spring offensive in Southern Afghanistan. For weeks U.S. Commanders have been warning that extremists, most of them based in the neighbouring country, were preparing to unleash a bloody offensive aimed at driving NATO out of the southern region and capturing the Kandahar city.

4. Further, NATO Commanders are downplaying the threat and assess that Taliban do not pose a strategic risk to the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai. However, they admit that insurgents are capable of launching guerrilla – style raids. Simultaneously, they are calling for more troops to bolster their strength. Meanwhile, Taliban has launched a series of attacks across Western, Southern, and Eastern Afghanistan – signaling their spring offensive is underway.

5. According to NATO officials, Taliban has concentrated forces in five Southern and Western provinces of Afghanistan - Helmand, Kandahar, Farah, Uruzgan, and Ghor. At least 6,000 Taliban militants are prepared for a spring offensive against NATO and Afghan forces. It is also learnt that Taliban have received new supply of weapons and have acquired capability to shoot down helicopters.

6. Against this background, Indian nationals in Afghanistan would be well advised to monitor daily news and media reports concerning their areas of work and residence and plan their movements accordingly. Since media reports have been indicating militant offensive against International military forces, it would be prudent to maintain safe distance from all kinds of military convoys, which continue to remain as primary targets. Movement around military bases is also fraught with risk as was witnessed in the recent attack on Bagram Air base near Kabul city on February 27, 2007 during the visit of the Vice President of the USA to Afghanistan.

7. It is also likely that Taliban, if unable to attack foreign military forces, may target civilians as they are less well defended. Therefore, it would be prudent to be vigilant regarding any new persons or curiosity being expressed regarding your activities or locations. Such suspicions should be reported to the undersigned.

8. *The information is shared mainly for the safety and security of Indian nationals and may not be disseminated indiscriminately.*

**(Pranab Nanda)
Counsellor (PA)**