

24 Insurgents Killed in Lashkargah Fighting

LASHKARGAH - Two dozen militants have been killed in Lashkargah, the capital of southern Helmand province, officials said on Wednesday.

On the other hand, the Taliban claimed inflicting casualties on the security forces in a string of clashes. Cap. Ahmad Shakil Tasal, deputy spokesman for the 215th Maiwand Military Corps, confirmed to Pajhwok Afghan News a series of clashes in Lashkargah over the past 24 hours. He said 24 militants were killed and 11 others wounded during the gun battles. Mullah Fazlullah, a Taliban



commander, was among the dead, he said. Another rebel commander, Mullah Mohammad Ewaz, was injured.

The security forces destroyed weapons, equipment and vehicles belonging to the Taliban, Tasal said. He added only one Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier was killed and three others were wounded.

A police official, who wished to go unnamed, said new security posts had been created in the Ainak area of Nawa district and in the 2nd police district of Lashkargah. However, the source ... (More on P4)...(8)

2 Children Dead, 3 Injured in Zabul Explosion

QALAT - Two children have been killed and three others, including a woman, wounded in a bomb explosion in Shahr-I-Safa district of southern Zabul province, an official said on Wednesday.

Gul Islam Siyal, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News the explosion took place in the Siraj Qala locality of the district on Tuesday at around 2pm.

He said two children were killed when the warhead they were playing with inside their house went off. The three wounded, including a woman, were evacuated to hospital and their health condition is said to be stable.

Elsewhere, a rebel was killed and two others were wounded during a clash with security forces in Sewri district on Tuesday, he said. The Taliban have not yet commented on the casualties. (Pajhwok)

Marine Jailed for Killing Injured Afghan Inmate is Denied Bail

LONDON - Ex-Royal Marine Alexander Blackman, who is serving life for the murder of an Afghan fighter, has been refused bail ahead of an appeal. He was sentenced to life by a court martial in 2013 and had an appeal dismissed in 2014. But the case of the 42-year-old from Taunton is due to be heard by the Court Martial Appeal Court for a second time next year.

On Wednesday, his request to be bailed until the hearing was refused.

Blackman watched the court proceedings in London via video link from jail.

His wife, Claire, was in the courtroom along with a number of his supporters. Speaking outside the court after the ruling, Mrs Blackman said: "We are obviously disappointed by the judges' decision not to grant bail this afternoon."

"However we must remember that earlier this month the Criminal Cases Review Commission decided to refer the case back to the Appeal Courts and this is the most important step towards getting Al's conviction and sentence overturned. "We are grateful to the courts for expediting the



Mullah Imam Arrested for Raping Child in Ghazni Province

KABUL - A Mullah Imam (prayer leader) of a mosque has been arrested over alleged rape of a child in south-eastern Ghazni province.

According to the local security officials, the incident took place in a remote village located in the outskirts of Ghazni city.

Provincial Criminal Investigation Department Chief Mohammad Qahir Nasiry confirmed the incident and said the Imam has been arrested and is in custody of the police forces. He said the perpetrator ... (More on P4)...(11)

Woman Raped by Brother-in-Law Seeks Justice

KABUL - A Baghlan woman who was allegedly raped by her husband's brother has appealed to the authorities to prosecute the man.

According to the victim, who is from Guzargah district of Baghlan, the incident happened eight months ago but police have still not arrested the man.

"I called my husband and I told him that your brother raped me but my husband said it was not a problem," said the victim.

The victim's family has also



spoken out and called for justice.

"I don't have the power to arrest the rapist (that's why) I came here (to the media) to call for justice," said the victim's father.

The Baghlan Women's Affairs department has meanwhile raised concern over what they say is an increase in ... (More on P4)...(13)

13 Taliban Including Group Commander Killed in Kunduz

KUNDUZ - Some 13 Taliban militants, including a group commander, have been killed in operations in the northern Kunduz province, an army spokesman in the province said Wednesday.

"Since launching crackdown on Tuesday, 13 Taliban rebels including a group commander, Mullah Ramadan alias Khanjar, have been killed and 15 others including another commander, Mullah Mansoor, sustained injuries," spokesman Gulam Hazrat Karimi told reporters here.



However, he admitted that three government forces personnel had been wounded in the fighting which has been continuing. Taliban militants

Three Militants Killed in Kandahar

KANDAHAR - Three Taliban militants including a group commander Mullah Mohibullah have been killed in Shah Walikot district of the southern Kandahar province, said a statement of provincial government released here on Wednesday.

According to the statement, Mohibullah and his two fighters had been killed in Kekhi Kotal area of Shah Walikot district after the security forces targeted militants' hideouts on Tuesday afternoon. Huge quantity of arms and ammunitions ... (More on P4)...(12)



Suspected Taliban militants are under arrest in Naingarhar Province, on Wednesday December 20, 2016. Some 44 militants were killed in government operations against their hideouts within the past 24 hours, said the Defense Ministry on Wednesday. (Xinhua/Rahman Safi)

Outlook Horoscope

Aries (Mar. 22-Apr.20)

The solemn energy of the Winter Solstice chills the air as the Sun spends more time under the earth today than any other time of year. The Sun's shift into dependable Capricorn illuminates your 10th House of Career, revealing the distance between you and who you want to be. Although you might be eager to begin reaching toward this ambitious new version of you.

Taurus (Apr.21-May 20)

This night is the longest of the year, but your solid and steadfast nature can weather the dark better than most. The Winter Solstice demarcates the Sun's entrance into calculating Capricorn, shining the light of awareness into your 9th House of Beliefs. However, it's essential to take some time to reestablish your place in the world now rather than adopt to a new way of thinking.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

The year's steady progression changes direction at the Winter Solstice. The Sun's move into persevering Capricorn introduces light into the depth of your 8th House of Regeneration. Although this shadow work falls at one of the busiest times of the year, your soul calls you to ponder what parts of you need to be pruned so you can begin to grow anew. Self-analysis takes courage, but the rewards are potentially great if you're willing to embark on this inner quest.

Cancer (June 21-July 20)

Beyond the frenzied noise of the holiday season, there is a small stillness that invites you to listen. The Sun's shift into cautious Capricorn shines a spotlight on your 7th House of Relationships, enabling you to see a delicate issue from another person's perspective. Answer the call and take time to mull over what kind of energy you're attracting through other people.

Leo (July 21-Aug. 21)

You are inexplicably intrigued today by the very same issues you've been doing your best to avoid. The Sun's entrance into responsible Capricorn brightens your 6th House of Health, so ask yourself what you must do to support your body as the container for your spirit. Although the answers you receive may extend beyond your mundane routine.

Virgo (Aug. 22-Sep 22)

It might seem as if there isn't even time to take a breath, but it's crucial now to create moments of peace in order to contemplate the meaningful questions of life. The Sun slips into ambitious Capricorn, lighting a candle in your 5th House of Self-Expression and stirring your creative juices. Although you may grow obsessed with being fully authentic in all avenues of your life, it's not necessary to change every behavior today.

Libra (Sep 23-Oct. 22)

All your life experiences thus far combine to make up an essential part of your inner world. The Sun's entry into solid Capricorn today sheds light on your 4th House of Foundations, asking you to reevaluate the stability of the ground you stand on. Unfortunately, you might encounter fear as you realize that your emotional infrastructure isn't as supportive as you wish.

Scorpio (Oct.23-Nov.22)

The time has come when the longest night of the year compels you to go inside and stare into the deep reflecting pool that is your mind. The Sun's move into strategic Capricorn lights up your 3rd House of Communication, asking you to explore how you process thoughts and ideas with a critical eye.

Sagittarius (Nov.23-Dec.20)

Amidst all the holiday hoopla, you might be more pensive today - questioning what truly matters. Instead of searching for an answer, you are curious as to how you assign value to physical things and metaphysical concepts.

The Sun marches into conservative Capricorn and your 2nd House of Possessions, setting a more somber tone to your thoughts. Fortunately, you're likely to uncover some profound truths hidden in the corners of your awareness.

Capricorn (Dec.21-Jan19)

The busiest time of the year also happens to be the most internally active for you Mountain Goats. The Sun's shift into your sign is like the beginning of your personal new year. While this is traditionally a period of celebration for many, you sense that a deeper transformation is accompanying the outer noise now. You might have to pull some strings to change your plans to accommodate your introspective frame of mind.

Aquarius (Jan 20-Feb.18)

Although the light of winter is dim in the northern latitudes, it still has the power to slowly melt through the walls of fear. The Sun enters solemn Capricorn today, illuminating the darkness of your 12th House of Secrets. It's time to get serious about taking inventory of the myriad of thoughts within the privacy of your mind.

Pisces (Feb.19-Mar.20)

The recent shift in energy encourages you to run a full self-evaluation review, both inside and out. The mighty Sun's rays shine in your 11th House of Hope, highlighting your aspirations and dreams for the weeks ahead. Who you are and where you're going are intricately entangled, so take time before you start your journey to separate the threads that are weaving your current visions.



Across

1. Rate, 5. Impudent, 10. Hairdo, 14. Pang, 15. Brownish gray, 16. Marsh plant, 17. Loud, 19. Attired, 20. Furrow maker, 21. Owl sounds, 22. Ceases, 23. Call before a court, 25. French for "Morning", 27. Tiny, 28. Accosts, 31. Pier, 34. Avoid, 35. Mineral rock, 36. Red gemstone, 37. TV, radio, etc., 38. Affaire d'honneur, 39. Nigerian tribesman, 40. Light purple, 41. Artist's workstand, 42. Earthquake waves, 44. Terminate, 45. Not a single time, 46. Treachery, 50. Hostel, 52. Manner of speaking, 54. Pother, 55. Murres, 56. Basis, 58. Gave temporarily, 59. Protrusion, 60. Monster, 61. Balcony section, 62. Small islands, 63. Where the sun rises.

Down

1. Ottoman title, 2. Thespian, 3. Inspire, 4. Poetic dusk, 5. Flunky, 6. Moses' brother, 7. A set of garments, 8. Convulsive, 9. Hanking, 10. North Pole area, 11. Criminal, 12. Harvest, 13. Probabilities, 18. Stealer, 22. Anagram of "Ties", 24. Askew, 26. Aquatic plant, 28. Soft drinks, 29. Tall woody plant, 30. Peddle, 31. Court order, 32. Centers, 33. Abundance, 34. Excited, 37. Marcel Marceau was one, 38. 20th-century art movement, 40. Wash, 41. Colonic, 43. Cancel, 44. Wears away, 46. Slight color, 47. Type of antelope, 48. Smells, 49. A nine-piece musical group, 50. Quiet time, 51. Chocolate cookie, 53. Boring, 56. A law enforcement agency, 57. Foot digit.

Yesterday's Solution

STREP ACED JOWL
TIARA NOSE ARIA
ERGOT NONE CIST
PEASHOOTER KOPH
WIRTS WEANS
REGGAE SHEEN
EVERY SHOELACES
VINO SOUND POSE
SLEUTHING TEASE
NATIS WASTED
UNDUE TAB
ANAL LIBERATION
LITIL DOER SURGE
MORN EWER CRTIES
SNAIG DIATTA ONSEI

active, amaze, answer, ardor, aries, bucket, cauliflower, char, cornered, deafness, denote, discount, dynamo, falcon, gathers, gland, hammer, harpy, improvise, label, leas, listen, moss, pear, premature, prevent, raise, scale, scout, seer, serious.

C O R N E R E D E N O T E
A M A Z E S P R E V E N T
U A C T I V E Q N K Y R T
L F Z A L S F I C P X A X
I P R E M A T U R E O W I
F S C O U T B A H A F A M
L I S T E N H E N R A T P
O S E R I O U S L D L C R
W E H A M M E R M O C H O
E D E A F N E S S R O H V
R A N S W E R G L A N D I
Y Y O U N G G A T H E R S
D I S C O U N T S C A L E