

Key Afghanistan Taliban commander killed in US air strike

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EPASecurity has been stepped up in the aftermath of the killing of Mullah Abdul Manan Akhund

One of the Taliban's most senior commanders has been killed in a US airstrike in Afghanistan.

Mullah Abdul Manan Akhund was the Taliban's "governor" and military chief for the southern Helmand province.

He was killed in the Nawzad district of Helmand on Saturday night, provincial officials said.

The Taliban said his death was a "major loss" but it would not deter them in their efforts to take back control of Afghanistan.

But Afghan interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish told the AFP news agency his death was a major blow to the Taliban and would "lower the morale" of its fighters in southern Afghanistan.

- [What's life like under the Taliban?](#)
- [Militants 'threaten 70% of Afghanistan'](#)
- [Who are the Taliban?](#)

Helmand is where British troops were based for eight years before ground troops were withdrawn in 2014. Large parts of the province are now back under Taliban control.



The BBC was given rare access to see life under the Taliban in 2017

BBC research earlier this year showed [Taliban insurgents control more territory in the country](#) than at any time since 2014.

It is estimated that about 15 million people - half the population - are living in areas that are either controlled by the Taliban or where its fighters are openly present and regularly mount attacks.

However, there have been intense efforts to persuade the Taliban to begin peace talks to end the fighting. [It sent delegates to a meeting in Russia last month](#) to discuss the issue, but has refused to hold direct talks with the Afghan government.

Who are the Taliban?

- A hardline Islamic movement which swept to power in Afghanistan in 1996 after the civil war which followed the Soviet-Afghan war
- They ruled Afghanistan until they were ousted by the US-led invasion five years later
- In power, they imposed a brutal version of Sharia law, such as public executions and amputations, and banned women from public life
- Men had to grow beards and women to wear the all-covering burka; television, music and cinema were banned
- They sheltered al-Qaeda leaders, including 9/11 mastermind Osama Bin Laden