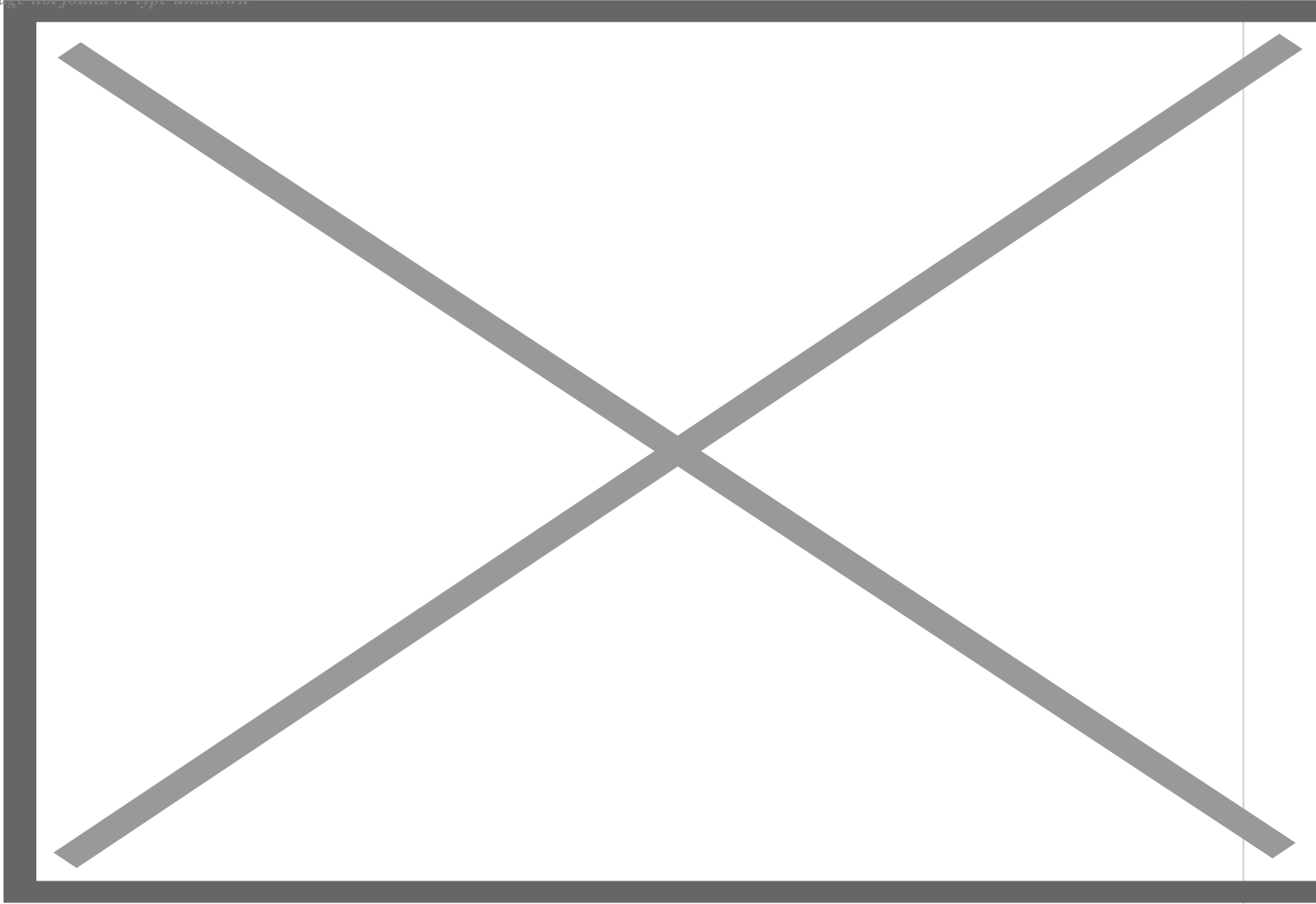


Afghanistan imposes night curfew to curb Taliban advance

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The curfew will be effective between 10pm and 4am local time [File: Rahmat Gul/AP Photo]

Kabul, July 25 (RHC)-- Afghanistan's government has imposed a night-time curfew across almost all of the country's 34 provinces to stem surging violence unleashed by a sweeping Taliban offensive that has seen the armed group make rapid territorial gains.

"To curb violence and limit the Taliban movements, a night curfew has been imposed in 31 provinces across the country," except in Kabul, Panjshir and Nangarhar, the interior ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

The measure will be effective between 10pm and 4am local time, Ahmad Zia Zia, deputy interior ministry spokesman, said in a separate audio statement to reporters. Al Jazeera's James Bays, reporting from the capital, Kabul, said the reason for the curfew was "quite straightforward".

"It's been clear for many years that in contested parts of Afghanistan, the government may control things during the day, but the Taliban, very much, own the night."

Fahim Sadat, the head of the international relations department at Kardan University, told Al Jazeera that "the government wants to keep an eye or restrict the movement from one region to another." "Also, this curfew will send a message to the large population centres in urban Afghanistan that the war has come to their doors, and those segments of the society who see themselves in support of the government needs to wake up and contribute in any way that they can," he said.

Wahida Shahkar, spokeswoman for the Parwan governor's office said that so far people in Parwan have not reacted to the news, but that the policy was going to be enforced in the northern province. "So far, we've been lucky, Parwan is still much better off in terms of security than other places, but we will follow the policy in order to ensure a more secure Afghanistan."

Basir Ahmad Waqef, a journalist in the city of Kunduz, said people dismissed the news in his province as well. "It's not positive or negative, we all just heard it on the radio and read the statement."

But he said given the security situation in the city, which he described as "surrounded in all four corners", people would likely follow the measure. "The government is probably going to have to carry out night operations, and one way to ensure people's safety is to make sure they are at home."

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