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Kabul, August 1 (RHC)-- The Taliban have fired rockets at a key airport in southern Afghanistan causing flight cancelations, and declaring that the attack was meant to thwart airstrikes by Afghan government forces on the militants' positions.

“Kandahar airport was targeted by us because the enemy were using it as a center to conduct airstrikes against us,” Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid told Reuters on Sunday. Airport chief Massoud Pashtun also confirmed that the airport was hit with three rockets overnight.

“Last night, three rockets were fired at the airport and two of them hit the runway... Due to this all flights from the airport have been cancelled,” he told AFP.

Authorities suspended all flights as the runway was partially damaged. There were no immediate reports of casualties, the officials said. Pashtun said the airport is expected to be operational later in the day as work to repair the damage is underway.

The attack on the airport comes as Afghan government forces are engaged in fierce clashes with the Taliban to prevent the militants from advancing on several major cities. The Taliban now control more than 200 of the country's 419 district centers, according to the US military.

Clashes continued Sunday between the militants and Afghan forces in two provincial capitals of Herat and Lashkar Gah. The militants advanced closer to the central parts of the western city of Herat as clashes entered the fourth day on Sunday.

On the city's outskirts, government forces also targeted Taliban positions with airstrikes overnight. Herat provincial governor's spokesman Jailani Farhad said that around 100 militant fighters were killed in the attacks.

Defense Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman said hundreds of reinforcements arrived in the city on Sunday morning. “At the moment the fighting is ongoing in the south and southeast,” Governor Qani said. Four days of fighting forced scores of families to flee their homes and seek shelter closer to the heart of the city.

The U.S. is largely blamed for the surge in violence in Afghanistan, as it has failed to stabilize the security situation there after two decades of war and occupation.

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