

U.S. sends B-52 bombers to Afghanistan in bid to stop Taliban offensive

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FILE PHOTO. A B-52 Stratofortress prepares for refueling over Afghanistan. © Reuters / US Air Force

Kabul, August 8 (RHC)-- The U.S. has dispatched heavy aircraft against the Taliban in Afghanistan, striking the group in the recently captured city of Sheberghan. The sortie came as the group reportedly reached Kunduz, the country's fifth largest city.

Taliban positions around Sheberghan, which became the second provincial capital to fall into the hands of the group over the past two days, were targeted by the B-52 Stratofortress aircraft on Saturday evening, according to Afghan military spokesperson Fawad Aman.

The strikes inflicted heavy losses on the militants, the official claimed, with over 200 fighters killed, and more than 100 vehicles destroyed. A large cache of weaponry of ammunition was destroyed as well. No footage to corroborate the Afghan government claims about Taliban's heavy losses, however, has emerged so far.

The Cold War-era heavy aircraft were also supported by AC-130 Specter gunships, US media reported. The ground attack planes of the type are heavily armed with miniguns, large-caliber rotary cannons and even a howitzer.

The bombing run came after the Taliban captured Sheberghan, the capital city of the Jawzjan province. Shortly before that, the city of Zaranj, the capital of Afghanistan's southwestern Nimroz province, also fell into the group's hands.

The groups offensive against the government continues across the country, with the militants reportedly infiltrating the third provincial capital and the country's fifth largest city of Kunduz on Saturday.

While the development has not been officially confirmed, pro-Taliban sources claim the militants captured large parts of the city. Footage circulating online purports to show the group's fighters inside the city.

The Taliban also reportedly captured a local prison and police headquarters, freeing inmates from their cells. In recent days, the group also put pressure on other provincial centers as well, including Kandahar in the south and Herat in the west – the second and the third most-populated cities of the countries.

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