



The US military build-up in Kandahar is likely to further strengthen the hold of the Taliban over the vital southern Afghanistan city, a highly respected security organisation said today in a bleak report warning of record Taliban violence and rising civilian deaths across the country.

The report by the Afghanistan NGO Security Office, which monitors trends in violence on behalf of aid organisations, said Nato's counter-insurgency strategy was not showing any signs of succeeding amid rising violence, the unchecked establishment of local militias and a huge increase in attacks on private development workers across the country.

It revealed that June marked a record for Taliban attacks – up 51% on the previous year to 1,319 operations.

At the same time the number of civilians killed by both sides of the conflict rose by 23%, despite the efforts of Nato forces to avoid killing innocent bystanders. The organisation also said attacks on private development organisations working on projects designed to win the support of ordinary Afghans had shot up, with more than 30 workers killed in the first three months of the year.

"We do not support the [counter-insurgency] perspective that this constitutes 'things getting worse before they get better', but rather see it as being consistent with the five-year trend of things just getting worse," the report said.

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