

By Great North News Services staff reporter

A third senior Taliban leader has been killed in a little over three weeks, just hours after Mullah Rahim, the most senior Taliban leader in Helmand, gave himself up to authorities in Pakistan, according to news report just in from British forces in Afghanistan.

Abdul Rasaq, aka "Mullah Sheikh", was the leader responsible for Taliban actions around Musa Qaleh. He had been active in the insurgency for a number of years but took responsibility for leading Taliban actions in the area when he was nominated by Mullah Rahim in December 2007.

Mullah Sheikh was killed, along with three others, in a precision missile strike 15km North of Musa Qaleh just after midnight on Sunday the 20th July. It is not reported whether this came from a Predator UAV. These deaths come eight days after Bishmullah, a senior Taliban leader handpicked by Rahim, was killed, and 24 days after Sadiqullah, a senior IED and SIED facilitator, was killed in an Apache missile strike.

"The operation was mounted as part of NATO's ongoing campaign against the Taliban leadership which has seen significant successes across Afghanistan in recent weeks. The power vacuum at the top of the Taliban chain will cause uncertainty in the remaining leaders as to who will fill the places left by Bishmullah, Mullah Sheikh and Mullah Rahim himself," said a U K spokesman.

The Provincial Governor of Helmand, Governor Mangal, urged other Taliban to give up the fight. In the provincial capital Lashkar Gar he said: "This is a great message for Helmand province. I advise all those Taliban who are engaging with terrorist actions that the fighting has no benefits. So this is the time to join with Islamic Republic, and choose a good, bright and honourable way, because life is a gift from Almighty Allah."