

As part of Operation HERRICK XI, over the last 36 hours elements of the 1st Battalion Royal Welsh, Grenadier Guards and Scots Guards have taken part in an air and ground ISAF operation in the south of Helmand province, Afghanistan.

The operation, being conducted with Afghan National Security Forces, is part of the preparation for a major ISAF offensive known as Operation MOSHTARAK.

Op MOSHTARAK has been planned to remove insurgents from areas of central Helmand not previously cleared by ISAF troops.

Major General Gordon Messenger briefed the media today on Op MOSHTARAK saying that local leaders had been party to the planning stages and are leading the governance effort that will follow.

Major General Messenger also said that the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) had been more engaged in the leadership and planning of the operation than in any other up to this point.

Major General Messenger said that Op MOSHTARAK was the second phase of a plan to secure central Helmand from the influence of the Taliban, the first stage being the moves led by Major General Nick Carter to secure areas around Kandahar and the improvement of movement on Highway 1 and Highway 601, which run through Helmand province.

Op MOSHTARAK, which will be led by the US Marine Corps, is yet to begin, but operations over the last 36 hours by British and Afghan forces have been building momentum towards it.

Major General Messenger emphasised that when the major offensive does begin it will be a multi-national ISAF operation, of which British forces are a part.

He also stressed that the areas targeted are areas that have not been cleared before. He said that they are areas that have long wanted to be cleared by commanders and now they have the manpower to do so - both ISAF and Afghan.

In line with talking about the intention to launch an offensive, Major General Messenger said that the plan was to clear the area in a way that was 'as least aggressive as possible'.

It was also stressed that subsequent to the clearance operation, the holding stage of the process was as much a part of the planning as the clearance stage, the first not being possible until forces for the holding stage were in place.

Speaking from Kabul ahead of the announcement by Major General Messenger, Lieutenant General Nick Parker, ISAF Deputy Commander in Afghanistan, said that Op MOSHTARAK

was the first part of a three-stage plan to increase security in the country.

He said that after the insurgency in the south had been subdued British forces would move to building capacity in the Afghan National Security Forces and that this would likely become the main effort later in the year.

The third stage will be transition and the reintegration of insurgents and sympathisers into Afghan society through an Afghan-led reintegration policy.

Article taken from the Ministry of Defence website. To view the full article [click here](#).