
U.S. LASHES OUT AT TALIBAN'S LAUNCH OF NEW OFFENSIVE

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U.S. Acting Secretary of State John Sullivan on Wednesday attacked Taliban's launch of its annual Spring Offensive in Afghanistan, saying there is no justification for it.

The Taliban militants announced earlier on Wednesday the start of their yearly rebel offensive, accusing U.S. troops of sabotaging all chances of peace and playing a decisive role in prolonging the conflict in Afghanistan.

They urged civilians to stay away from places regarded as legitimate targets by militants, and warned people not to support the government.

Later in the day, the Taliban claimed multiple attacks across the country.

In an announcement, Sullivan said Taliban's remarks affirmed its responsibility "for the insecurity that destroys the lives of thousands of Afghans each year."

"There is no justification for the announcement of a new offensive. There is no need for a new 'fighting season,'" he said. "More violence will not bring peace and security to Afghanistan."

"We support the brave Afghan security forces who are standing against the Taliban and terrorist groups that seek to destroy Afghan society," he added.

The U.S. diplomat urged the Taliban to "turn their bullets and bombs into ballots."

"They should run for office. They should vote. We encourage Taliban leaders to return to

Afghanistan from their foreign safe havens and work constructively for Afghanistan's future," Sullivan noted.

The Taliban militants, who ruled the country before being ousted in late 2001, renewed armed insurgency.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and U.S. forces completed their combat mission in Afghanistan by the end of 2014 after 13 years of military presence in the country. However, around 16,000 foreign troops remain to train and assist the Afghan forces.

Kaynak/Source: