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From: H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>
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To: 'JilotyLC@state.gov'
Subject: Fw: Afghan president says talks with Taliban useless (AP)

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From: Abedin, Huma [mailto:AbedinH@state.gov]
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From: OpsNewsTicker
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Subject: Afghan president says talks with Taliban useless (AP)

KABUL (AP) - Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who for years pushed for reconciliation with the Taliban, now says attempts to negotiate with the insurgent movement are futile and efforts at dialogue should focus instead on neighboring Pakistan.

The Afghan leader explained in a videotaped speech released by his office Saturday that he changed his views after a suicide bomber, claiming to be a peace emissary from the insurgents, killed former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani at his home on Sept. 20. Rabbani was leading Karzai's effort to broker peace with the Taliban.

"Their messengers are coming and killing. ... So with whom should we make peace?" Karzai said in the recorded address Friday to a gathering of the nation's top religious leaders.

"I cannot find Mullah Mohammad Omar," Karzai said, referring to the Taliban's one-eyed leader. "Where is he? I cannot find the Taliban council. Where is it?"

"I don't have any other answer except to say that the other side for this negotiation is Pakistan," Karzai said.

Most of the Taliban leadership is thought to be living in Pakistan, and its governing council _ known as the Quetta Shura _ is based in the southern Pakistani city of the same name. It has long been believed that the Pakistani government has sheltered and influenced the group.

Afghanistan said Saturday it had evidence that Rabbani's assassination was planned by Taliban figures living in Quetta.

Last week, U.S. officials leveled accusations of their own, saying Pakistan's spy agency assisted the Haqqani network _ a militant group allied with al-Qaida and the Taliban _ in attacks on Western targets in Afghanistan. It was the most serious allegation yet of Pakistani duplicity in the 10-year war.

The Pakistan-based Haqqani network has been described as the top security threat in Afghanistan.

NATO said Saturday it captured Haji Mali Khan, a senior Haqqani leader inside Afghanistan, describing his arrest as a "significant milestone" in disrupting the terror group's operations.

The group has been blamed for hundreds of attacks, including a 20-hour siege of the U.S. Embassy and NATO headquarters last month.

The United States and other members of the international community have in the past accused Pakistan of allowing the Taliban, and the Haqqanis in particular, to maintain safe havens in the country's tribal areas along the Afghan border _ particularly in North Waziristan.

An Afghan government statement issued earlier in the past week said Pakistan had failed to take steps to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries. It added that if Pakistan's intelligence service is using the Taliban against Afghanistan, then the Afghan government needs to have negotiations with Pakistan, "not the Taliban."

That statement was released after Karzai met with senior government, religious, political and jihadi leaders to discuss the peace effort.

Khan, the Haqqani leader being held by NATO, was seized Tuesday during an operation in eastern Paktia province's Jani Khel district, which borders Pakistan, the alliance said.

It was the most significant capture of a Haqqani leader in Afghanistan, and could dent the group's ability to operate along the porous border with Pakistan's lawless tribal areas.

Shortly after NATO's announcement, Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid denied in a message to Afghan media that Khan had been arrested but provided no evidence that he was free.

NATO described Khan as an uncle of Siraj and Badruddin Haqqani, two sons of the network's aging leader, Jalaluddin Haqqani.

"He was one of the highest ranking members of the Haqqani network and a revered elder of the Haqqani clan," NATO said of Khan.

During the operation Tuesday, Khan surrendered without resistance and NATO forces also arrested his deputy and bodyguard, along with a number of other insurgents, the alliance said.

"The Haqqani network and its safe havens remain a top priority for Afghan and coalition forces," NATO concluded.

The NATO statement said security forces have conducted more than 500 operations so far in 2011 in an effort to disrupt the Haqqani network leadership, resulting in the deaths of 20 operatives and the capture of nearly 300 insurgent leaders and 1,300 suspected Haqqani insurgents.

In a related development, Afghanistan's intelligence service said Saturday it has given Pakistan hard evidence that Rabbani's assassination was planned in the southern outskirts of Quetta where key Taliban leaders are based.

The Taliban have not claimed responsibility for killing Rabbani.

Lutifullah Mashal, a spokesman for the Afghan intelligence service, provided the first details about where the assassination was allegedly planned at a news conference.

"The place where Professor Rabbani's killing was planned is a town called Satellite near Quetta, Pakistan," Mashal told reporters. "The key person involved in the assassination of Rabbani has been arrested and he has provided lots of strong evidence about where and how it was planned. We have given all that evidence to the Pakistan embassy."

The Afghan intelligence documents handed over to Pakistan's embassy in Kabul include the address, photographs and a layout of a house in Satellite, Mashal said. He said the Pakistanis also have been provided with the names of individuals who discussed Rabbani's assassination at the house in Satellite.

Satellite Town is an upscale residential area very close to the city center and it is known to residents that Afghan Taliban live there.

Mashal would not disclose the identity of the person in custody, saying only that he was a second-tier figure within the Taliban hierarchy.

He said additional details would be released soon by a commission set up to investigate Rabbani's death.

Asked what Afghanistan expected Pakistan to do with the information, Mashal referred the question to the Afghan Foreign Ministry and the commission.

"This is all concrete evidence that nobody can ignore," he said.

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