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John Kerry target of multiple rocket blasts in Kabul on weekend – Taliban

19/04/2016



Although Kerry was apparently the intended target of the blasts, the attacks occurred just after he had left Afghanistan, CNN reported. No casualties resulted from the strikes, according to Afghan government spokesman Sediq Sediqqi.

Afghan news outlet Khaama Press reported that the back-to-back explosions occurred after a number of rockets were fired from an unknown location on Saturday night.

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A security official told the newspaper that one of the rockets landed in the area of the second police district, which is close to the Presidential Palace and a number of government ministries, and presumably where Kerry was taking part in meetings.

Another rocket apparently landed near a girls' high school in the same area.

Kerry was in Kabul to urge reconciliation between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, who share power in the country's national unity government, which Kerry helped create.

Despite holding roles in the same government, the two leaders remain deadlocked over key ministries. The feud has led to the resignation of several ministers, while new appointments have yet to be confirmed by parliament. Other officials within the government could lose their jobs over corruption and mismanagement.

Kerry noted during his visit that the tension between Ghani and Abdullah could have drastic consequences for Afghanistan's government.

*"We need to make certain that the government of national unity is doing everything possible to be unified and to deliver to the people of Afghanistan,"* Kerry said in an address to the US-Afghanistan Bilateral Commission, which he hosted with Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani.

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The Saturday attacks came just one week after two separate [blasts](#) hit Kabul's diplomatic district while Kerry was visiting. The blasts took place shortly after Kerry had wrapped up his visit, when his plane was preparing to take off from Bagram airport outside Kabul, according to Reuters.

Afghan security forces are struggling to fight Taliban militants, who are at their strongest since they were ousted by US-backed Afghan forces in late 2001. The group has refused to participate in peace talks with the Afghan

government.

The Taliban announced its spring offensive last week, the same day that five Afghan border officers were [killed](#) in an insider attack.

Meanwhile, Washington plans to scale back its troops in Afghanistan by early 2017. Although the White House had previously planned to withdraw the majority of soldiers in 2014, US President Barack Obama back-tracked on that plan. The move was viewed as unexpected, as Obama had campaigned to bring troops home and had stressed that he did not support the *"idea of endless war."*

The commander of international troops in Afghanistan, US General John Nicholson, is conducting a review of the security situation in the country, including the plan to cut US troop numbers in 2017. If the current plan goes unchanged, the reduction in US soldiers would signal the end of most of NATO's training and assistance program, leaving the remaining troops to focus on counter-terrorism operations against radical groups. Plans to completely remove US troops from Afghanistan have not been announced.

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