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UN Lifts Sanctions on Afghan Warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar

By Jason Ditz
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The UN Security Council has voted to lift all sanctions against long-time Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the head of the Hezb-e Islami militant group. The move lifts all asset freezes and travel bans on Hekmatyar, as well as an arms embargo against him.

Hekmatyar twice served as prime minister of Afghanistan in the 1990s, and since the US invasion and occupation his faction has simultaneously been repeatedly presented as terrorists, and as a potential moderate faction to kickstart negotiations with the Taliban.

In practice, neither has really been the case, and while Hekmatyar political faction has some support, his militant faction has been practically irrelevant for years. In September, the group finally signed a peace deal with the Afghan government, a fact which was considered little more than a side-note so deep into the war.

Hekmatyar remains in hiding as of the UN announcement, but his spokesman says he will soon make an appearance and go to Kabul. He is seen as keen on trying to get some sort of political position for himself, now that he's officially at peace with the Afghan government.