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زبان های اروپایی

Reuters

## Northern Alliance leaders met members of U.S. congress

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A group of Afghan political leaders on Monday cast doubt on the outcome of U.S. talks with the Taliban, which have become a key focus of Washington's efforts to leave Afghanistan as planned by 2014.

Abdul Rashid Dostum, army chief of staff and leader of the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, said the talks could win the Taliban time, allowing them to make gains after the departure of international troops.

Senior U.S. officials told Reuters last month that, after 10 months, talks with the Taliban had reached a critical juncture and they would soon know if a breakthrough was possible.

Dostum and three other Northern Alliance leaders met four members of the United States congress in Berlin on Monday, where they issued a joint statement urging a decentralisation of power in Afghanistan and criticising the peace talks.

"There is an assumption that the Taliban may be using the negotiation process as a cover, as a means of calming the United States, and then ... gaining time by 2014 to resurge," Dostum said at a news conference in Berlin.

"We cannot afford to be naive and exclude the possibility of a negative turn of the situation."

The statement described the talks as flawed because they exclude anti-Taliban Afghans, and risk betraying those Afghans who fought to remove the Taliban from power a decade ago.

The Taliban said in a surprise announcement last week they had reached a preliminary agreement to set up a political office in Qatar and asked for the release of prisoners held by the U.S. military at Guantanamo Bay.

Republican congressman Dana Rohrabacher said he and three fellow congress members joined the talks because they fear the United States government might be about to make unacceptable compromises.

Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, leader of the People's Unity Party of Afghanistan and an influential power broker in the country, said: "we are not against achieving peace through negotiation, our doubts are about the quality and mechanism of the negotiations."