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Taliban Strike Afghan Capital and Provinces

By Alissa J. Rubin, Graham Bowley and Sangar Rahimi

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KABUL - The Taliban staged multiple and sustained attacks across Kabul and eastern Afghanistan on Sunday hitting the heavily secured diplomatic neighborhood of Kabul and the Parliament area as well as Afghan government installations in at least two provinces.

The attack began in Kabul at about 1:35 p.m. and was still under way more than an hour and 15 minutes later. The last major attack on a diplomatic installation in Kabul was an attack by suicide bombers on the American Embassy that lasted for 19 hours last September and was blamed on the Haqqani network.

The Kabul police said Sunday that two attacks were under way, one near the Zambak Square entry to the Presidential Palace and one near Parliament.

Gunfire followed by several explosions broke out in an area near the German and British Embassies and a major NATO military camp in Kabul, usually a heavily secured area of the Afghan capital at just after 135 p.m. on Sunday. Rockets landed near the British and Canadian Embassies and World Bank office.

In the upscale residential neighborhood of Wazir Akbar Khan, police rushed past a supermarket a couple of hundred meters from the roadway that leads to the German Embassy and Camp Eggers, a major NATO camp that includes many of the top officials that run the NATO training mission.

There were several explosions that sounded like bombs followed by explosions from several rockets. Sirens sounded at nearby embassies warning people to “duck and cover and get away from the windows.”

With each explosion windows shook in nearby houses.

Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, blasted a text message to reporters saying: “We sent suicide bombers to Kabul and they are now taking over Parliament, US Embassy and all diplomatic buildings.”

In Paktia Province, three gunman wearing suicide vests stormed into a building opposite the police training center in Gardez, said Abdul Rahman Mangal, deputy provincial governor of Paktia. They were shooting at the academy with light and heavy weapons. At least four people have been wounded.

In Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan, gunmen armed with suicide vests entered Afghan National Army corps headquarters, which is near the airport and were shooting, the Nangahar police chief, Abdullah Stanekzai, said.