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Taliban reject safe passage agreed at trilateral moot

By Imdad Hussain

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ISLAMABAD: Afghan Taliban on Saturday rejected the trilateral forum agreement in Islamabad to give a safe passage to terrorists willing to talk to the Afghan government.

In a message received, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid termed the decision a US tactic to make jihadis surrender.

“The meeting agreed on a sub-group that would provide room for protection, facilitation, and arrange travels of those mujahideen who, as the meeting termed, were ready for reconciliation. It is an attempt to get them surrendered to the US demands in the name of reconciliation,” he said.

In the wake of the Karzai administration’s quest for holding direct talks with the Taliban and the desire of Washington to resume the stalled talks with them in Qatar, the high-level delegations from the US, Afghanistan and officials from Pakistan met on Friday to discuss the challenges and opportunities in reconciliation as well as peace in Afghanistan and other issues. The meeting of the trilateral forum, also known as the core group, agreed to form a sub-group at the UN level to coordinate activities in New York and another group, consisting of experts, to find ways and means to provide the negotiating Taliban with a safe passage, including de-listing their names from the terrorists’ list of the UN.

Foreign Secretary Jalil Abbas Jilani, Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Jawed Luddin and US special envoy Marc Grossman made the announcement at a joint press conference at the Foreign Office after their sixth core group meeting the other day.

The Taliban spokesman said that the defeating US and its allies were engaged in self-deception by applying such tactics. “The US and its allies have so far not recognised mujahideen, who are not fighting for positions or greed. Rather we are doing jihad as an independent nation and representatives of Pakhtuns for freedom.”

The US was on the run and on the verge of defeat and it was trying to secure its status quo in the world, he said, adding that according to the meeting in Islamabad, the mujahideen would surrender in the name of reconciliation. “They (the US and its allies) should not expect from anyone among the mujahideen to surrender in the name of reconciliation.”

The Taliban, denying talks with Kabul last month, said the group had suspended contacts with the Americans in Qatar over a prisoner exchange. Even the talks with the US in Qatar were underway when the Taliban made it clear that negotiations would never mean that the intensity of attacks on foreigners would be lowered.

Taliban are willing for a political process with the international community, but as they had already said confidence-building measures are essential before reaching to the stage of talks for peace.