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UK forces accused of helping Taliban

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Most of the Regional Command in the South of Afghanistan will be shifted from the UK to the US, as British forces are accused of having links with the Taliban.

Based on new arrangements, British forces in the south that includes Kandahar province will be placed under American control as part of a radical restructuring plan being drawn amid a new phase of war against the Taliban.

US forces who are preparing themselves for a major strike on the Taliban in the volatile province of Kandahar are reluctant to see the British control the province.

British newspaper, The Independent, said that command in southern Afghanistan will be split in half, with UK troops answering to a US general from June 1.

According to some reports, the changes are made as the British have reportedly cooperated with the Taliban in recent years and allowed Afghan farmers to cultivate opium freely.

The reports say that the British forces were even involved in the process of drug trafficking itself.

Mullah Abdul Salam, a former Taliban official who has joined the Afghan government, publicly accused the British of assisting the Taliban.

He said the British command in the region at one point did not block a Taliban assault when they attacked Afghan forces under Abdul Salam's command.

The former Taliban member said that in 2008, Afghan President Hamid Karzai expelled two European diplomats from the country because of their links with the Taliban.

The expulsion order was made after the pair -- Michael Semple, an Irish EU official with extensive Taliban contacts, and Mervyn Patterson, a UN official from Northern Ireland -- travelled to the town of Musa Qala in northern Helmand to meet Afghan powerbrokers, days after the Taliban fighters were driven out by British troops.

A source in Kabul said that the accusation against the men was made after President Karzai of Afghanistan was told that the pair were attempting to broker a deal with the Taliban behind his back.

Unnamed Afghan officials initially claimed that the pair had visited Taliban leaders, paid them, and may even have supported the militancy.