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The Telegraph

Taliban: 'Britain is our greatest source of funding'

The Taliban has claimed that Britain is its greatest source of revenue and the group is funded by donations in mosques and Muslim community centres around the country

By Praveen Swami and Dean Nelson

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We are not like a government, we depend on individuals,” a Taliban commander told Sky News. “We get donations from our Muslim brothers in Britain for jihad and they help us. It is the duty of all Muslims to pay towards fighting a jihad. And this is how we get our money and buy our weapons and carry on fighting.”

The commander added that an attack on Britain and Europe could happen “at any time”.

However, in what was seen as a blow to the insurgents, [Afghan](#) and American official have been holding secret talks with the second ranking figure in the Taliban in the firmest indication yet that substantive peace talks have begun.

The Daily Telegraph has learned that Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar was released from Pakistani custody

Baradar was the Taliban's overall military commander until he was arrested in Karachi last February by Pakistani security forces.

Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, opposes any dialogue until the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) withdraws from Afghanistan, but Baradar was seen to be open to talks that may have excluded the hard-liners.

Baradar and three senior lieutenants travelled to Afghanistan under Nato guard for the talks. "Baradar isn't acting on our behalf but our understanding is that he is meeting with people in his organisation to build a consensus that will let the Taliban come to the dialogue table," an Afghan official said.

Gen David Petraeus, the commander of Nato forces in Afghanistan, disclosed that Taliban figures had been granted safe passage to talks in Afghanistan. The admission came amid a flurry of claims that senior Taliban leaders, including members of its ruling Quetta Shura and the feared Haqqani Network, were involved in talks.

Until now, contacts between President Hamid Karzai's government and the Taliban-led insurgency have been low-level and regarded as inconsequential by diplomats. Washington remains sceptical about talks and the disclosure that Baradar is involved may be designed to marginalise hard-liners close to Mullah Omar.

Taliban commanders have conceded that Baradar is now in Afghanistan. A Pakistani diplomatic official said Baradar was "to the best of my knowledge, no longer in our custody".

A statement published on the Taliban's website early this week was ambiguous on talks. It said: "Nobody would believe such talk unless foreign troops in Afghanistan act honestly, [and] announce clear and transparent plans for addressing the issue."

Baradar was among the earliest Afghanistan fighters to swear allegiance to Mullah Omar in 1994 after the organisation was formed.

He rose to be the Taliban's deputy chief after the 2004 death of its one-legged military commander, Mullah Dadullah.

Michael Semple, a former European Union envoy, said many hurdles remained before an agreement could be reached. "If this signals that the US and Nato are starting to take a more creative approach to the Taliban leadership and thinking of them as potential partners for peace in Afghanistan, then it's a step forward," he said.

The Taliban were blamed yesterday for a roadside bomb that killed eight people in a vehicle in Delaram district of south-western Nimroz province. Six people were wounded, the provincial police chief Abdul Jabar Purdeli said.

Meanwhile, last month's Afghan parliamentary election result was thrown into disarray when the country's election commissioner rejected 1.3 million votes - 23 per cent of those cast – as fraudulent.

