

Incident Update

Taliban Attack on German Consulate in Balkh Province

10 November 2016

Factual Updates

On Thursday, 10 November 2016, at least four people were killed while 115 others wounded when militants affiliated with Afghan Taliban detonated an explosives-laden vehicle near the entrance gate of the German Consulate in Mazar-Sharif city of Balkh province.¹ According to the spokesman of German Foreign Ministry, the building of consulate sustained considerable damage; however, all its staff remained unhurt in the violent attack. Taliban while claiming responsibility stated that the attack was staged in retaliation to civilian casualties during ongoing military operation in Kunduz province.²

Situational Background

The incident took place in Mazar-e-Sharif, the provincial capital of Balkh province and one of the most developed, densely populated and peaceful cities of northern Afghanistan. Although Taliban insurgents are reported to be active in the city, however, the city is not among their strongholds in the country.³ The attack on German Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif took place seven days after a joint operation by the US and Afghan security forces against the Taliban in Pul-e-

¹ "Attack On German Consulate In Balkh Leaves 4 Dead, Over 100 Wounded", Tolo News, November 11, 2016
<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/28275-attack-on-german-consulate-in-balkh-leaves-4-dead-over-100-wounded>

² "Taliban Car bomb hit German Consulate in Northern Afghanistan", CNN, November 11, 2016
<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/10/middleeast/afghanistan-taliban-german-consulate-car-bomb-attack/index.html>

³ "Attack On German Consulate In Balkh Leaves 4 Dead, Over 100 Wounded", Tolo News, November 11, 2016
<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/28275-attack-on-german-consulate-in-balkh-leaves-4-dead-over-100-wounded>

Alchin area of Kunduz province, during which 30 civilians, two US soldiers and 26 Taliban insurgents were killed.⁴ The insurgents targeted the German Consulate in Mazar Sharif in retaliation to that operation as proclaimed by the Taliban. According to Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman of Afghan Taliban, the latest attack was carried out to avenge the civilian casualties in NATO airstrikes in Kunduz. He further asserted, “Heavily armed fighters, including suicide bombers, were sent with a mission to destroy the German consulate general and kill whoever they found there.”⁵

Analysis

Taliban insurgents, since the beginning of the current year of 2016, have stepped up their activities against the western backed coalition government in Afghanistan. With Taliban insurgents regaining strength and emergence of new actors like Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK), heavy fighting has been continued for months across the country, from Kunduz, the northern province that fell briefly to the insurgents in 2015, to Helmand province bordering Pakistan in the south.⁶

To regain the lost territories and counter the growing operational capacity, influence and threat perception of Taliban insurgents in the country, Afghan National Army (ANA), with the help of NATO-led resolute mission, is conducting intensive military operations across the country. In this context, it is important to mention that Germany, with about 850 soldiers at a military base in the outskirts of Mazar-i-Sharif along with another 1,000 troops coming from 20 partner countries, is heading the NATO-led Resolute Support mission in the northern Afghanistan.⁷

⁴ “Afghan Civilians killed in NATO Airstrike in Kunduz”, Aljazeera, November 03, 2016

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/afghan-civilians-killed-nato-air-strike-kunduz-161103125808035.html>

⁵ “Attack On German Consulate In Balkh Leaves 4 Dead, Over 100 Wounded”, Tolo News, November 11, 2016

<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/28275-attack-on-german-consulate-in-balkh-leaves-4-dead-over-100-wounded>

⁶ “30 Civilians, 2 US Soldiers Killed in Afghan Fighting”, VoA, November 03, 2016

<http://www.voanews.com/a/us-soldiers-killed-in-afghan-fighting/3577341.html>

⁷ “At least four killed in Taliban raid on German consulate in Afghanistan”, The Guardian, November 11, 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/10/taliban-attack-german-consulate-mazar-i-sharif-afghanistan-nato-airstrikes-kunduz>

Kunduz, which is one of the largest cities of Afghanistan's and is a strategically important transport hub, has been the site of a number of anti-Taliban operations in particular. On 03 November 2016, 30 civilians, two US soldiers and 26 militants were killed in NATO airstrike against Taliban insurgents.⁸ In a statement, Gen. John W. Nicholson, commander of the US forces in Afghanistan, described the loss of his troops and civilians as “heartbreaking” and offered his deepest condolences on behalf of his forces to the families and friends of the victims.⁹

Implications

The attack on German consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif, the provincial capital of Balkh province, not only signifies the Taliban insurgent’s growing operational capacity in the north part of Afghanistan but also manifests their intent to carry out high profile attacks in relatively peaceful areas like that of Mazar-e- Sharif. Moreover, the growing number of civilian casualties in the ongoing military operation will help the Taliban insurgents to recruit more fighters into their ranks by legitimatizing their propaganda of waging jihad (Holy War) against foreign occupiers in the country.

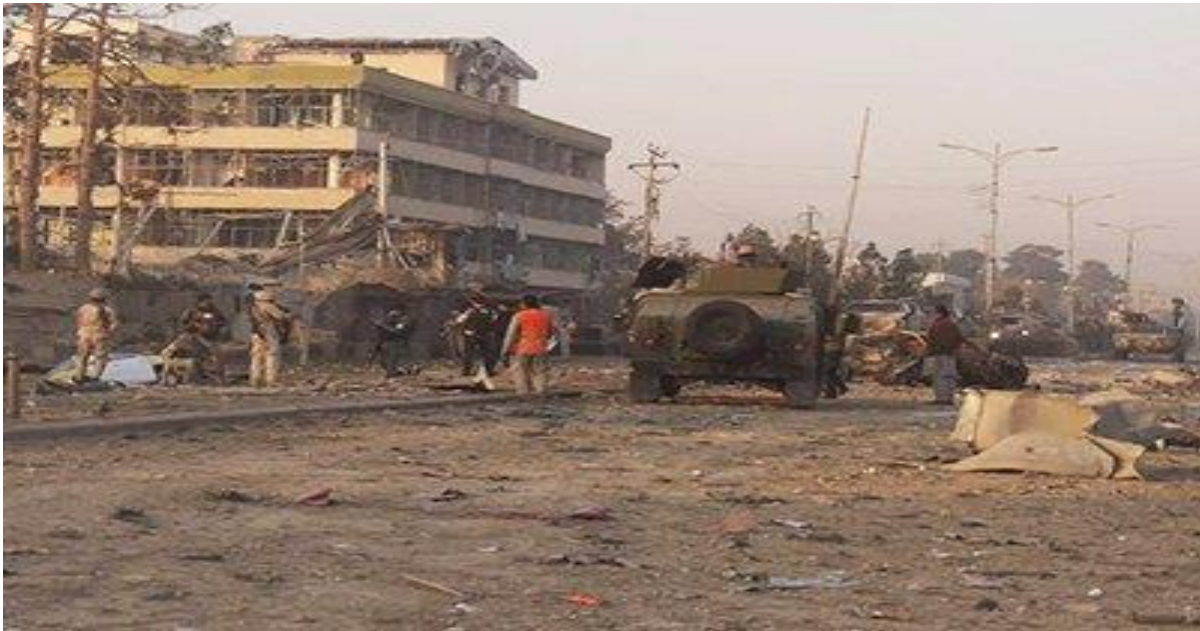
⁸ “Attack On German Consulate In Balkh Leaves 4 Dead, Over 100 Wounded”, Tolo News, November 11, 2016
<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/28275-attack-on-german-consulate-in-balkh-leaves-4-dead-over-100-wounded>

⁹ “30 Civilians, 2 US Soldiers Killed in Afghan Fighting”, VoA, November 03, 2016
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Location Map



Photo Gallery



Site of the incident, Mazar-e-Sharif, Tolo News, 11 November 2016



Rescue work near German Consulate in Mazar-e-Sahrif, BBC, 11 November 2016