

## Incident Update

### Bomb Blast Caused Heavy Casualties in Kabul City

01 June 2017

#### Factual Updates

On Wednesday, 31 May 2017, at least 90 people were killed and more than 461 others were injured when an explosive laden vehicle detonated in Kabul city, the capital of Afghanistan. The incident took place at around 8:30 AM in Zabaq Square area in diplomatic quarter near German Embassy and the presidential palace in 10<sup>th</sup> District of Kabul.<sup>1</sup> Initial reports suggest that majority of the casualties in the bomb blast were of civilians.<sup>2</sup> According German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, a security guard was killed while several employees of the German Embassy were injured in the blast. Likewise, 11 US citizens and four BBC journalists were also injured in the attack. The Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, condemned the attack. *“The terrorists, even in the holy month of Ramadan, the month of goodness, blessing and prayer, are not stopping the killing of our innocent people,”* he said in a statement.<sup>3</sup>

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. The National Directorate of Security, in a statement, accused the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network, with Pakistani support, of being behind the attack. However, Zabullah Mujahid, the spokespersons of Afghan Taliban in a statement rejected the claims of NDS and said *“the group has no role in the attack and the Taliban fighters were also not involved in it”*<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Guardian, “Kabul: at least 90 Killed by Massive Car Bomb in Diplomatic Quarter”, The Guardian, 31 May 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/31/huge-explosion-kabul-presidential-palace-afghanistan>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The CNN, “Kabul blast: Attack kills 90 near diplomatic area in Afghanistan”, 31 May 2017. <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/31/asia/kabul-explosion-hits-diplomatic-area/>

<sup>4</sup> Khaama, “Pakistan-based Haqqani network behind Kabul attack: NDS”, 31 May 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/pakistan-based-haqqani-network-behind-kabul-attack-nds-02837>

## Situational Background

The bomb laden vehicle exploded in a busy square near the embassies of western countries, government institutions and residences of high-ranking officials in Kabul city. It took place about 400 yards away from the German embassy near one of the busiest and the most fortified part of the city.

## Analysis

Since the beginning of the year 2017, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated significantly. Taliban insurgents and Islamic State of Khorasan have shown their resolve and capability to carry out high profile and complex attacks in Kabul city. The recent attack is the reminder of how Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, has become a vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Since November 2016, four high profile and complex terrorist attacks have taken place only in Kabul city which left 176 people killed, while scores of others were injured which highlights the vulnerability of Kabul city to such attacks despite 15 years of the US led military intervention to counter the Afghan Taliban.<sup>5</sup>

The recent bomb blast took place at a time when the US is considering to send more troops to suppress the growing operational capacity of Afghan Taliban and the increasing presence of Islamic State of Khorasan in Afghanistan. The US secretary of defense, James Mattis, has warned of another tough year for both foreign troops and local forces in Afghanistan, where more than a third of the country is outside of government control<sup>6</sup>. According to US officials, Trump Administration is debating to send 3,000 to 5,000 troops to Afghanistan to assist and train Afghan security forces for battlefield. Already, 13, 000 NATO forces – 8, 400 of them from the USA – are training and advising Afghan security forces as a part of UN resolute mission to Afghanistan<sup>7</sup>.

Although the Afghan Taliban have condemned the attack, the National Directorate of Security has accused the Taliban affiliated Haqqani network for the terrorist incident. According to a statement by NDS, *“credible intelligence information confirms the attack was carried out by the network (Haqqani Network) on direct instructions and with the support of the Pakistani military intelligence, Inter Services Intelligence.”*

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<sup>5</sup> The CNN, “Kabul blast: Attack kills 90 near diplomatic area in Afghanistan”, 31 May 2017.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/31/asia/kabul-explosion-hits-diplomatic-area/>

<sup>6</sup> The Guardian, “Kabul: at least 90 killed by massive car bomb in diplomatic quarter”, The Guardian, 31 May 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/31/huge-explosion-kabul-presidential-palace-afghanistan>

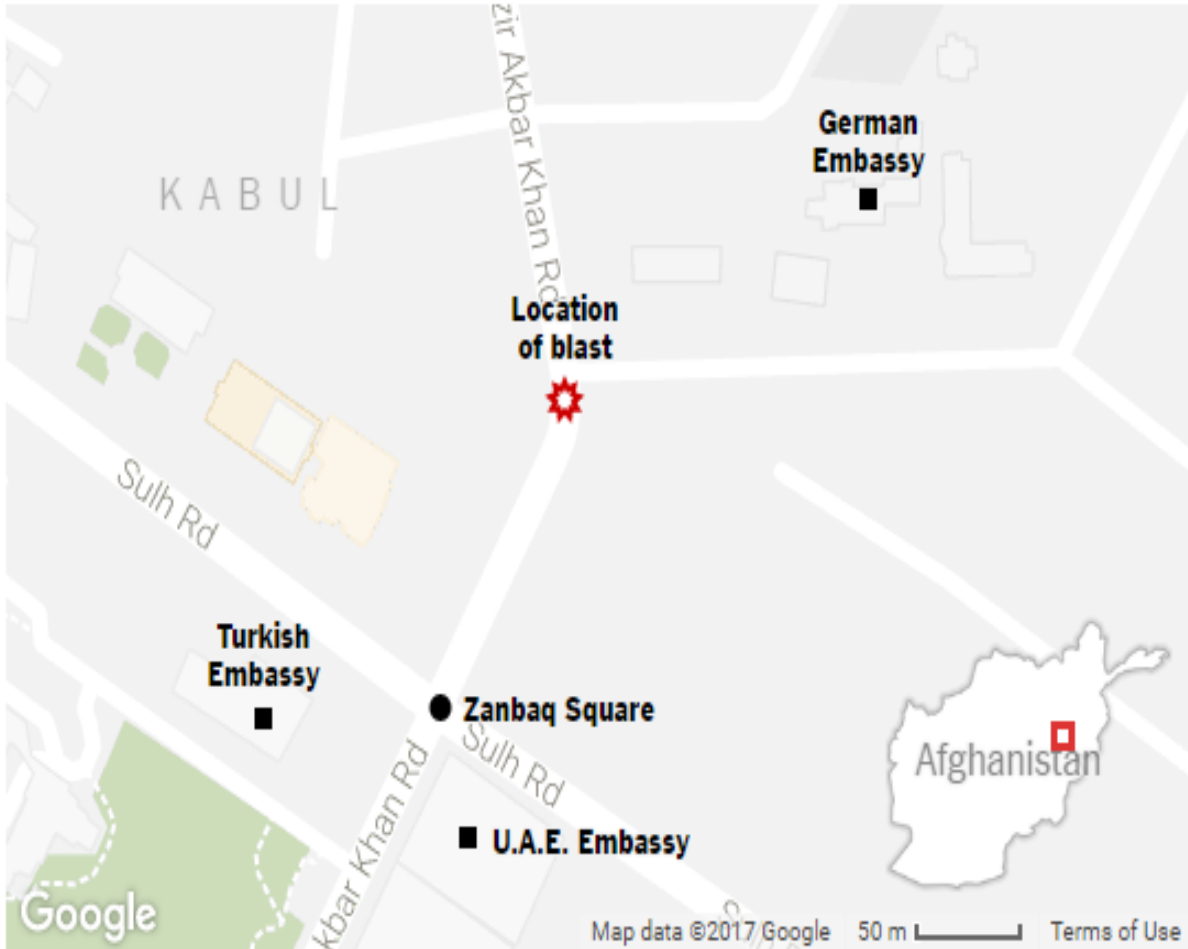
<sup>7</sup> Tolo, “U.S Looking At 'Adjustments' To Afghanistan's War Strategy”, 5 May 2017.

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/us-looking-adjustments-afghanistans-war-strategy>

## Implications

The attack signifies the deteriorating security situation in the country, particularly in Kabul city. It will provide an opportunity to Trump Administration to persuade other NATO members to increase their troops inside Afghanistan. US is already considering to send 3000 to 5000 more troops to thwart the Taliban led insurgency in the country. The incident will also have implications for the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The ties between the two neighboring countries are already on the lowest, the Kabul attack will further worsen it.

## Location Map



## Photo Gallery



Injured Civilians at Blast Site, CNN, May 31, 2017.



Afghan Security Forces Patrol the Blast Site, CNN, May 31, 2017.