
AFGHANISTAN'S TALIBAN MEETS CHINESE GOVERNMENT IN BEIJING

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A Taliban delegation met Chinas special representative for Afghanistan in Beijing on Sunday to discuss the groups peace talks with the United States, a spokesman for the Islamist insurgency said.

The meeting comes after U.S. President Donald Trumps eleventh-hour cancellation earlier this month of the negotiations between his country and the Taliban, which many had hoped would pave the way to a broader peace deal with the Afghan government and ending a 17-year war.

The Talibans nine-member delegation traveled to Beijing and met Deng Xijun, Chinas special representative for Afghanistan, said Suhail Shaheen, the Afghan groups spokesman in Qatar, on his official Twitter account.

Qatar was where the Taliban and the United States held peace talks over the past year.

The Chinese special representative said the U.S.-Taliban deal is a good framework for the peaceful solution of the Afghan issue and they support it, Shaheen wrote.

Mullah Baradar, the Taliban delegations leader, said they had held a dialogue and reached a comprehensive deal, Shaheen tweeted.

Now, if the U.S. president cannot stay committed to his words and breaks his promise, then he is responsible for any kind of distraction and bloodshed in Afghanistan, Baradar said, according to Shaheen.

Chinas foreign ministry did not immediately respond to an e-mail requesting comment, sent outside its usual operating hours. Chinese officials in Kabul also did not immediately respond to a messaged request for comment.

Afghanistan will this coming week hold its fourth presidential elections since U.S.-led forces toppled the Taliban from power in 2001.

Those elections have gained importance since the collapse of the peace talks, as the negotiations could have led to the creation of an interim government, now a more distant prospect.

In June, before the peace talks fell apart, another Taliban team went to China to meet with the government.

At the time, a foreign ministry spokesman said China supports Afghans resolving their problems themselves through talks, and the visit was an important part of China promoting such peace talks.

China's far western Chinese region of Xinjiang shares a short border with Afghanistan.

China has long worried about links between militant groups and what it says are Islamist extremists operating in Xinjiang, home to the mostly Muslim Uighur people, who speak a Turkic language.

China, a close ally of Pakistan, has been deepening its economic and political ties with Kabul and is also using its influence to try to bring the two uneasy neighbors closer.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-china/afghanistans-taliban-meets-chinese-government-in-beijing-idUSKBN1W70I3>

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