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## **TENSION GROWS AMONG TALIBAN MODERATES, HARD-LINERS IN AFGHANISTAN GOVERNMENT**

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Kathy Gannon

Friction between pragmatists and ideologues in the Taliban leadership has intensified since the group formed a hard-line Cabinet last week that is more in line with their harsh rule in the 1990s than their recent promises of inclusiveness, said two Afghans familiar with the power struggle.

The wrangling has taken place behind the scenes, but rumors quickly began circulating about a recent violent confrontation between the two camps at the presidential palace, including claims that the leader of the pragmatic faction, Abdul Ghani Baradar, was killed.

The rumors reached such intensity that an audio recording and handwritten statement, both purportedly by Baradar himself, denied that he had been killed. Then on Wednesday, Baradar appeared in an interview with the countrys national TV.

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