

Two dead in shooting at CIA headquarters in Kabul

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An Afghan employee at the CIA headquarters in Kabul opened fire on Sunday evening, killing an American CIA contractor and injuring another man. The gunman was killed during the attack. The shooting is the latest in a series of incidents that have highlighted the tenuous character of the US-led military occupation of Afghanistan, and the widespread hostility to it.

The CIA headquarters are located in the Ariana hotel, near the US embassy and the presidential palace, in the diplomatic quarter of Kabul. The details of what took place are unclear. US officials do not want any examination of the CIA's criminal activities in Afghanistan and have said as little as possible. What has been said raises more questions than it answers.

US embassy spokesman Gavin Sundwall said the shooter was not authorised to carry a weapon, and it was not known how the gun was brought into the compound. However, an anonymous US official told the *Washington Post* the gunman was "believed to have worked for the local guard force," which would have given him access to the compound, and authority to carry a gun.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, one official in the vicinity of the Ariana hotel heard initial gunfire from an M4-carbine, a weapon commonly used by American troops, indicating that the shooter may have had higher-level access to the headquarters than suggested by US officials. Witnesses initially heard gunfire at 8.15 p.m., followed by an explosion, and more gunfire. Two more explosions were heard at 8.30 p.m. The explosions have not been explained.

Other details point to the intense tension between US-

NATO forces and their counterparts in the Afghan army. The Afghan security personnel deployed to the scene were denied access to the compound. According to some reports, American guards fired on an Afghan army vehicle nearby, believing it to be involved in the attack. A CIA-employed guard and two Afghan soldiers were reportedly injured in the ensuing firefight.

A senior Taliban commander told Reuters that the gunman was a Taliban recruit, adding: "He used the enemy's weapons against the enemy and that's what we've been doing everywhere in Afghanistan...This place is at the heart of Kabul and we wanted to tell the Americans that we can chase them anywhere."

The Taliban's ability to penetrate every aspect of the security structures in Afghanistan stems from the deep-seated resentment, hostility and anger felt by broad layers of the population to the decade-long US occupation, the venal regime of President Hamid Karzai and the carnage and misery that the US-NATO invasion has produced. Despite its reactionary ideology, the Taliban finds recruits and sympathisers at all levels of Afghan society.

The CIA, which is directly involved in the dirty work of recruiting Afghan turncoats, spies, mercenaries and militias, is vulnerable to such attacks. In December 2009, a suicide bomber killed seven CIA agents, including the CIA station chief, and a private security contractor during a meeting at Forward Operating Base Chapman, near the eastern Afghan city of Khost. The bomber was reportedly a high-level and trusted intelligence asset who had lured the senior CIA agents to the meeting with the promise of vital information.

The latest incident at the CIA headquarters follows at least 20 attacks since March 2009 on US and Afghan government targets by Afghan military personnel or insurgents wearing military uniforms.

Sunday's shooting is the second time in less than a month that an armed attack has been carried out within the heavily fortified diplomatic quarter of Kabul, supposedly one of the most secure areas in Afghanistan. On September 13, Taliban fighters conducted coordinated attacks in Kabul, with insurgents firing on the American embassy, NATO headquarters and the offices of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security. The attacks lasted over 19 hours.

A week later, on September 20, the Afghan government's chief peace negotiator Burhanuddin Rabbani was killed in his home by a suicide bomber, who claimed to be an emissary with an important message from the Taliban leadership. Both incidents involved the penetration of heavily-guarded "secure" areas.

These attacks expose the fraudulent character of the Obama administration's public claims that the situation in Afghanistan is stabilising, in preparation for a handover of security responsibilities to an Afghan client regime in 2014. Behind the scenes, policy makers are well aware of the lack of popular support for Karzai's puppet regime. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, an internal US-NATO report, seen in June, described attacks by Afghan security forces on their American counterparts as a "rapidly growing systemic threat," stemming from a "crisis of trust."

A recent UN report states that the number of security incidents increased by 39 percent, over the three-month period from June to August, compared to the corresponding period in 2010. The number of suicide attacks has remained consistent over the 12-month period. This stands in sharp contrast to a report by NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), at the end of August, which stated: "Throughout 2011 ISAF has seen significance security improvements throughout Afghanistan."

The US has responded to growing instability, by encouraging, and in some cases directly funding, pro-government militias, which essentially function as thugs charged with intimidating the civilian population. According to Human Rights Watch, pro-government militias have been implicated in killings, extortion, rapes and beatings.

Growing instability in Afghanistan has broader geopolitical implications, ratcheting up tensions between Washington and Pakistan. US officials blamed the September 13 embassy attacks on the Haqqani group, which operates out of North Waziristan. Last week, US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen branded the Haqqani network a "veritable arm" of Pakistan's principal intelligence agency, the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), while a US Senate committee voted to make \$1 billion in aid conditional on the Pakistani military fighting the Haqqani group and other regional militias.

Pakistan's interior minister Rehman Malik denied accusations of ties between Pakistan and the Haqqani, retorting that the group was largely created and funded by the US during the 1980s war against the Soviet Union. Many of the present top-level CIA officials, who cut their teeth on the agency's massive "secret" war against the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul, are now faced with the same leaders and militias—including Al Qaeda—that they helped create.



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