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Taliban proposes temporary ceasefire in Afghanistan

Russ Read

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The Taliban proposed a temporary ceasefire in Afghanistan to a U.S. envoy on Wednesday, according to reports.

The plan was delivered to U.S. negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad in Qatar, where the Taliban maintains a political office. The outline proposes a seven- to 10-day ceasefire.

The outline could be a first toward a longer-lasting peace process, according to the Cato Institute's Chris Preble. "The Bush administration made a grave error in categorically excluding the Taliban from the political process," Preble told the *Washington Examiner*. "The war in Afghanistan cannot end without such a process, and the Taliban must have a seat at the table. We don't have to like it. We just need to accept reality."

Khalilzad has sought a ceasefire for some time. Talks with the Taliban floundered late last year and have not made significant progress since. The Trump administration aims to develop a road map that would allow the United States to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan after 18 years of conflict.

The Taliban's violence against U.S. troops has not ceased despite Khalilzad's negotiation attempts. On Saturday, Army Staff Sgt. Ian McLaughlin and Pfc. Miguel Villalon were killed when an improvised explosive device struck their vehicle in Afghanistan's Kandahar province. American deaths in the country reached a five-year high in 2019, with 17 service members killed due to hostile actions.

The Taliban's ceasefire proposal followed a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing Wednesday morning, when John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, blasted the government's failures in the country. He blamed U.S. alliances with corrupt Afghan warlords for helping the Taliban return to prominence.