

TALIBAN FORMS 14-MEMBER TEAM FOR PEACE TALKS

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The Taliban announced on Tuesday a 14-member team to meet American negotiators this month in Doha, including five former Guantanamo Bay inmates and a high-profile militant behind bars in Afghanistan.

U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has undertaken extensive recent peace talks with the Taliban about ending the 17-year war in Afghanistan, with another round expected in late February.

Captured in 2014

The expanded negotiating team unveiled by the insurgents includes Anas Haqqani, who was captured in 2014 and whose older brother is deputy Taliban leader and head of the Haqqani network. A spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani flatly denied that Anas would be freed. "Anas Haqqani is in prison, and no decision has been taken for his release," the spokesman, Haroon Chakhansuri, said on Twitter.

The Taliban has long demanded that Anas be released, saying that he is a student. Afghan authorities accuse him of being a high-level player in the Haqqani network.

The insurgents said the team announced on Tuesday "would continue the current peace talks with the Americans".

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