

Afghan talks with Taliban reportedly unsubstantial

BY JONATHAN S. LANDAY
AND WARREN P. STROBEL
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Contrary to news reports of high-level talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, there are no significant peace negotiations in Afghanistan, U.S. officials and Afghanistan experts said Thursday.

They said the reports, which appeared in a number of U.S. media outlets, could be part of a U.S. "information strategy" to divide and weaken the Taliban leadership.

"This is a psychological operation, plain and simple," said a U.S. official with firsthand knowledge of Afghan President Hamid Karzai's outreach effort.

Exaggerating the significance of contacts between Karzai's government and the Taliban "is an effort to sow distrust within the insurgency, to make insurgents suspicious with each other and to send them on witch hunts looking for traitors who want to negotiate with the enemy," said the U.S. official. He spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

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PHOTOS BY SETH ROBBINS/Stars and Stripes

Dr. Matthias Amann, left, and Dr. Alois Philipp make preparations to transport a 22-year-old soldier to the university hospital in Regensburg, Germany. Philipp helped develop the ECMO machine that was used on the wounded soldier during an evacuation.

Lifesaving INNOVATION

Portable heart-lung machine used in combat evacuation

BY SETH ROBBINS
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. team for the first time in a combat evacuation has used an innovative and portable heart-lung machine, saving a 22-year-old soldier wounded in Afghanistan.

The soldier had been shot in the chest, and a bullet had shredded his lungs.

That's when Dr. (Lt. Col.) Sandra Wanek got the call. The trauma surgeon led this week's medevac mission out of Afghanistan as part of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center's Lung Rescue Team, which flies to combat zones to treat servicemembers with

the most serious lung injuries and evacuate them to Germany.

Within hours, Wanek and her team were bound for Kandahar.

When they got there Wednesday, they operated on him for five hours and tried several different ventilators, but all of them failed.

"I just could not improve his oxygenation to the point where it was safe to fly," Wanek said.

After missing an evacuation flight and doing one more hour of surgery, Wanek chose to use the device — known as an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) machine — for the first time.

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The ECMO machine

The extracorporeal membrane oxygenation machine is a portable heart-lung machine developed by German doctors. It works by filtering carbon dioxide out of a patient's blood and infusing oxygen into the blood, mimicking the tradeoff that takes place naturally in the lungs.