

A team of as many as 10 Afghan Taliban militants armed with automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades mounted an assault Sept. 13 in a high-security zone in the capital Kabul against the U.S. Embassy among other targets. At least four of the attackers were likely suicide bombers and detonated themselves during the attack. The attack began at 1:30 p.m. local time and has been underway for some hours now. The militants took over a building in an area near Abdul Haq Chowk Square, a location in close proximity to Afghan government and Western security installations, including NATO headquarters.

While there have been many attacks in Kabul, this incident is one of the rare occasions that militants have demonstrated the capability to get extremely close to the heart of the Western military and intelligence presence in the Afghan capital. The ability to get numerous operatives armed with explosives and heavy guns into this area could not have been possible without the Taliban obtaining aid from Afghan security personnel posted in high-security areas.

The attackers are unlikely to succeed in doing much damage, and they will likely be overpowered by coalition forces — a fact the planners of the attack knew in advance. The light weapons the attackers were armed with simply could not cause significant damage to a hardened facility such as the U.S. Embassy. Therefore, the attack was meant to be more of a psychological operation than a physical one. This attack, likely the work of the Haqqani network, is designed to undermine U.S. efforts to negotiate with the senior leadership of the Afghan Taliban movement.