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Militants attack Kabul election commission office

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Militants have attacked the headquarters of the Afghan election commission in the capital, Kabul, one week ahead of presidential election in the country.

Officials said on Saturday that quick-response teams were dispatched to the area as rockets and gunfire were unleashed from a near building.

“I can confirm an attack at the IEC (Independent Election Commission) headquarters,” said IEC spokesman Noor Mohammad Noor.

“We heard two explosions inside the IEC compound, the sound of firing is still ongoing, but people are safe and are in (reinforced) safe rooms,” he added.

The Taliban militant group has claimed responsibility for the assault via a recognized Twitter account.

Afghanistan’s Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi has said initial information indicates that “three or four attackers have occupied a building and are firing on the IEC office.”

The attack comes a day after Taliban militants raided a guesthouse frequented by foreigners in an upscale neighborhood of Kabul. Two people were killed in the incident.

The Taliban say they will disrupt the vote on April 5. The militants are said to be preparing to attack polling staff, voters and security forces in the run-up to the election day.

On March 25, Taliban militants broke into a separate IEC office in Kabul, killing five people.

Violence in Afghanistan has been on the rise in recent years, despite the prolonged presence of foreign forces in the war-torn country since the US-led invasion in 2001.