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Up to 18 Afghans Arrested in Foiled Suicide Attack

By John Glaser

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The Afghan authorities have arrested 18 people, some Afghan National Army soldiers, in Kabul after thwarting an attempted mass suicide attack, [intelligence officials told the BBC](#).

Up to 11 suicide jackets have been seized inside the Afghan Ministry of Defense, according to the sources, in attacks that would have caused significant loss of life.

The Afghan Ministry of Defense dismissed the report as “rumors,” but BBC’s Bilal Sarwary in Kabul says they just want to play down a major security lapse that is highly embarrassing for the government at a very sensitive time in the war.

The fact that some of the suspects include Afghan soldiers is especially notable after [three more NATO troops were killed on Monday](#) in yet another “rogue shooting” by Afghan forces. Despite the incredible rising number of these incidents, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has [promised they are not a trend](#).

The war in Afghanistan has begun to suffer [unprecedented opposition](#) and the instability has been exacerbated by successive outrages like the U.S. military’s Koran burning, Staff Sgt. Robert Bales’s massacre of 17 civilians, and leaked video of Marines urinating on Afghan corpses.

Desperate to withdraw from Afghanistan while still saving face, the Obama administration has been [negotiating security arrangements with Kabul](#) and [engaging in peace talks with the Taliban](#). But the Taliban [suspended talks with the U.S. two weeks ago](#) after Bales's murderous rampage. Every facet of Washington's war has been falling apart in recent weeks.

But U.S. officials continue, [as they have for years](#), to pretend the failures don't exist. Ryan Crocker, U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, [said this week](#) he see progress amid an extended "rough" patch and cautioned against war fatigue.