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Report: Pakistani Taliban on Brink of Leadership Change

By Jason Ditz

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Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader Hakimullah Mehsud has been “confirmed” killed no less than eight times, and while he is still alive it is perhaps his first “killer” who will have the last laugh.



In early August of 2009, shortly after the assassination of TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud, Hakimullah was reported slain for the first time, by another of Baitullah's deputies, Wali-ur Rehman. By some accounts two killed one another. Both survived, however, and Rehman has remained the number two ever since.

Sources in the Pakistani military are now saying that Rehman has been shoring up support within the TTP and has effectively replaced Hakimullah as the operational leader at this point, a replacement which may be made a formal leadership change soon.

If this happens, officials say that Rehman may dramatically shift the TTP's strategy, moving away from attacks on the Pakistani government toward focusing on cross-border raids into Afghanistan to target NATO troops.