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Spy Chief's Attacker Hid Bomb in Groin, Afghanistan Says

By ALISSA J. RUBIN

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The man who tried to kill Afghanistan's intelligence chief this week by smuggling a bomb into a guesthouse in Kabul concealed the device "around his groin," according to a statement released Friday by the government. The statement suggested that could have been one reason the bomb might not have been detected during a search.

It called the bombing, which seriously wounded the intelligence director, Asadullah Khalid, "unethical and contrary to principles of Shariah law."

Shafiqullah Taheri, a spokesman for the National Directorate of Security, the agency headed by Mr. Khalid, said, "It is degrading and insulting to search anyone's genital area, according to Shariah law."

The spy agency has not said whether the bomber was searched — or to what extent — when he entered the guesthouse where Mr. Khalid met him on Thursday.

But if he were searched, the bomber would have forced any security guard who wanted to do his job thoroughly to behave in an un-Islamic fashion and intrude on an area of the body that is usually off limits to anyone other than a very close relative.

The only other information released Friday by the government was that Mr. Khalid, who is in his early 40s, was recovering. Western officials with some knowledge of the case said that while he would survive, he had serious abdominal injuries that would require multiple operations and that it was not yet clear if or when he would be able to return to work. The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the attack.

President Hamid Karzai visited Mr. Khalid on Thursday at a hospital run by the security directorate where he was initially taken, and Gen. John R. Allen, the commander of the international coalition forces in Afghanistan, visited him on Friday at the Bagram Air Base hospital, where he was transferred late Thursday.

The intelligence agency said little about the attack in its Friday statement and released no information about the attacker, including whether he had died in the explosion or had been shot by a guard.

The directorate's statement about the location of the bomb seemed in part to be a response to questions from the public about how a suicide bomber was able to get so close to Mr. Khalid without being detected.

Afghans have found the notion of security searches, which are routine in the West, extremely difficult to embrace from a religious and a cultural perspective. Muslim cultures generally place great emphasis on modesty, and men and women are reluctant to show any parts of their bodies to strangers. While different schools of Islamic law have somewhat different teachings, revealing any part of the body and touching anyone else's body is restricted.

In Afghanistan's extremely conservative culture, a sense of discretion runs even deeper. Even at the height of summer, most Afghan men do not wear shorts; if they were to, the shorts would be knee-length. Outside major cities, a vast majority of women would not leave their homes without wearing a burqa, a veil that completely hides the face and body.

Gradually, searches in Afghanistan have become more thorough as suicide bombers wearing explosive vests have become more prevalent. Afghan security forces have tried to inculcate a more Western approach to searches among their guards, but it has not been easy.

A number of Afghans regard a body search as an insult signifying a lack of trust. So if the bomber who tried to assassinate Mr. Khalid was being brought to meet him by a trusted person, guards might well have been reluctant to offend him with a thorough body search.