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Former Afghan warlord scuttles peace deal with Kabul

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A former Afghan warlord announced Monday that a much-touted peace deal between his militant group and the Kabul government was effectively “dead.” The comments by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar came after the armed wing of his Hezb-i-Islami party effectively scuttled the deal,

drafted weeks ago, with new demands that included the dissolution of the Afghan Unity Government, calling it a U.S. concoction. In his lengthy diatribe against the Kabul government in the Daily Shahdat magazine belonging to his group, Hekmatyar said the Afghan administration negotiated in bad faith and made demands it could not meet. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government had hoped an agreement with Hekmatyar would be an incentive for other insurgent groups to come to the negotiating table.

But in recent weeks, Hezb-i-Islami made additional, impossible-to-meet conditions, including the scrapping of Kabul's current security pact with the United States and a public timetable for the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar, writing under his pen name Haqpal, said Afghan government negotiators called the security pact with the United States "a red line that we cannot cross."

Hekmatyar said only a handful of his group's demands were met in the draft agreement, yet last month when his representatives left Kabul they said they had a final deal that needed only Hekmatyar's signature. Instead Hekmatyar returned the agreement with the additional demands.

He sent the revised deal in a letter his son was to deliver to Ghani. In that letter, Hekmatyar made his demands and said further negotiations should be restricted to the two leaders. His proposals were rejected.

Hekmatyar's military strength pales in comparison to the Taliban and is largely limited to the east and northeast of the country. Hekmatyar also has differences with the Taliban and his fighters have clashed with them on several occasions in eastern Afghanistan.

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