

RELEASE IN FULL

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**From:** Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 18, 2011 8:38 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: Taliban ready to open political office -Afghan negotiator (Reuters)

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**From:** OpsNewsTicker  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 18, 2011 08:36 AM  
**To:** NEWS-Afghanistan; NEWS-NEA; NEWS-Mahogany  
**Cc:** SES-O  
**Subject:** Taliban ready to open political office -Afghan negotiator (Reuters)

KABUL (Reuters) - The Taliban are willing to open an office in an Islamic country, a step towards holding face-to-face peace talks with Afghanistan, a member of the Afghan government's team of negotiators with the group said on Sunday.

After a series of failed attempts at talks by Afghans and their Western allies, in November Afghan President Hamid Karzai ruled out negotiations with the Taliban until the insurgent group had an address at which he could contact them.

"What we heard from senior Taliban commanders and their relatives, is they agreed on a political office," Arsala Rahmani, a senior member of Afghanistan's High Peace Council told Reuters on Sunday. "It would be better to establish one inside Afghanistan if the situation allows."

"We agree and have always called for a political address for the Taliban either in Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia or any Islamic countries and it is in our interest," Rahmani said.

Last week, Afghanistan recalled its ambassador to Qatar hours after an Indian newspaper reported that arrangements had been put in place for a Taliban office in the Gulf state.

The report caused worry in Kabul that the Afghan government would be excluded from the peace process were another country used as a the base for talks.

"Establishment of a political address of an office for the Taliban is very crucial and will have a great impact on the peace process," Rahmani said.

"Since the Taliban have no address, it is important to create a political address where we could talk about peace agendas face to face," he said.

The Taliban have not commented on the possibility of their opening an office.

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