



By: TA | AP Brief

Afghanistan and Pakistan head to Turkey for second round of crisis talks



Afghanistan and Pakistan are heading to Turkey for a second round of crisis talks, officials said, after recent **fighting** between them killed dozens of people and injured hundreds more.

The neighbors are embroiled in a bitter security row that has become increasingly violent, with each side saying they were responding to aggression from the other.

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of turning a blind eye to armed groups that cross the border for **attacks**, a charge the country's Taliban rulers reject.

Last weekend, Qatar and Turkey mediated a **ceasefire** to pause the hostilities. The truce has largely held, although the countries' border remains closed except for Afghan refugees leaving Pakistan.

Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Industry said traders are losing millions of dollars a day because border transit and trade have ground to a halt.

Southern Kandahar Province was the worst-hit by the recent fighting, especially Spin Boldak on the border, where Pakistani airstrikes killed people and destroyed homes.

The Doha talks were fruitful

On Friday, the Taliban government's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said Deputy Interior Minister Haji Najib was leading the delegation heading to Istanbul.

"The remaining issues will be discussed at this meeting," said Mujahid, who gave no further details.

In Pakistan, a Foreign Ministry spokesman was more expansive about the weekend's prospects.

"There has been no major full-scale terrorist attack emanating from Afghan soil in the last two to three days," Tahir Andrabi told journalists at a regular briefing. "So, the Doha talks and outcome were fruitful. We would like the trend to continue in Istanbul and post-Istanbul."

Pakistan is struggling to combat militancy, mostly in areas bordering Afghanistan.

Andrabi said there was a clear message to Kabul to stop the attacks, control and apprehend armed groups, and "our relations could be back on track."

"We are not asking for the moon," Andrabi added. He did not say who was in the Pakistani delegation.

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