

STARS AND STRIPES®

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Free to Deployed Areas



Reasonable doubt

MATT MILLHAM/Stars and Stripes

First Lt. Andrew Ferrara, 23, a platoon leader from Torrance, Calif., talks with locals during a patrol of the main bazaar in Shegal district, Kunar province, Afghanistan.

Foe to friend? GIs leery about working with Taliban defectors who wanted them dead

BY MATT MILLHAM
Stars and Stripes

COMBAT OUTPOST MONTI, Afghanistan — It's widely assumed by the soldiers of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, that Massoud killed two of their buddies.

But Capt. Michael Kolton, 29, the company's commander, won't ask the former insurgent leader about it.

"I don't want to know the answer."

Less than a week after a roadside bomb

'That's a hard thing for an individual soldier to forgive. But that's what reconciliation is.'

1st Lt. Andrew Ferrara
platoon leader, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment

killed two of Kolton's men in July, Massoud showed up at his austere mountain base after dark and sat down for tea. The clandestine encounter, one of many Kolton

says he had with militants in northern Kunar, set the ball rolling for Massoud's defection from the insurgency — along with 100 of his fighters — in February.

At first, the decision to look past Massoud's presumed transgressions and pave the way for his reconciliation with the Afghan government didn't go over well with the company's men.

"That's a hard thing for an individual soldier to forgive," said 1st Lt. Andrew Ferrara, 23, a platoon leader from Torrance, Calif., who has no doubts about the blood on Massoud's hands. "But that's what reconciliation is."

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Taliban launch attacks ahead of spring offensive

BY AMIR SHAH
AND DEB RIECHMANN
The Associated Press

KABUL — The Taliban launched a series of coordinated attacks across the Afghan capital and at least three eastern provinces on Sunday, targeting NATO bases, parliament and foreign embassies in a complex assault that shows the insurgents can still penetrate Afghan security and hit

Western and government targets in the heart of Kabul.

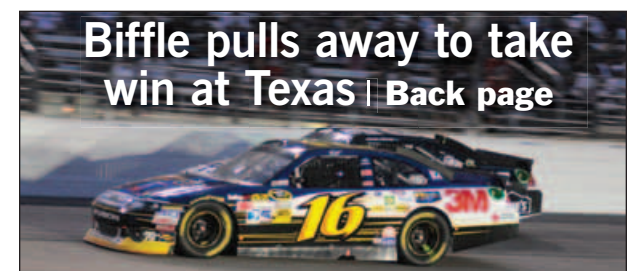
Suicide bombers and insurgents wielding heavy weapons and rocket-propelled grenades executed the near-simultaneous attacks in what the Taliban called an opening salvo ahead of the spring fighting season, when warmer weather typically brings increased attacks.

The attacks, the most widespread in the Afghan capital since Septem-

ber, came as the U.S.-led international force is speeding up the transfer of security responsibility to the Afghans in preparation for an end to NATO's combat mission in 2014.

The scale and scope of the violence underscored the challenge that Afghan security forces have in protecting even the country's centers of power.

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