

U.S. opens talks with Afghan insurgent group

Senior U.S. military and civilian officials have reportedly opened talks with Hizb-i-Islami, one Afghanistan's most notorious insurgent factions. It is led by warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, considered a terrorist by Washington

GULBUDDIN HEKMATYAR

Ethnicity: Afghan Pashtun **Age:** 65

■ **1970s:** Founds **Hizb-i-Islami** – one of main mujahideen groups that fight Soviet occupation during 1980s

■ **Early 1990s:** Group clashes with other mujahideen factions during civil war which followed Soviet withdrawal. Blamed for killing thousands in Kabul with indiscriminate rocket attacks

■ **1996:** Hekmatyar – sidelined by Pakistan in favour of Taliban leader **Mullah Omar** – flees to Iran following Taliban takeover of Afghanistan

■ **2001:** Declares himself against U.S. invasion in alliance with Taliban

■ **Hizb-i-Islami** Kunduz
Baghlan



■ **2002:** Expelled from Iran. Returns to Afghanistan, survives assassination attempt from unmanned U.S. drone

■ **2003:** Branded as terrorist by U.S. for supporting Taliban and Al Qaeda attacks

■ **Jan 2012:** Afghan President **Hamid Karzai** meets with Hizb-i-Islami for peace talks

■ **Jan 23:** Negotiator for Hekmatyar reveals he met **Gen. David Petraeus**, then NATO commander in Afghanistan, last year, and in recent weeks has held further talks in Kabul with U.S. ambassador **Ryan Crocker** and current NATO chief **Gen. John Allen**