

# Kabul airport blasts – who are IS-K?

The *Islamic State* affiliate in Afghanistan – known as *Islamic State Khorasan* or *IS-K* – is the most extreme and violent of all the jihadist militant groups operating in the country

## ISLAMIC STATE KHORASAN (IS-K)

■ **Origin:** Formed by disaffected fighters from Pakistani Taliban, following creation in 2014 of caliphate in Iraq and Syria by so-called *Islamic State* group

■ **Leadership:** Headed since Jun 2020 by *Shahab al-Muhajir*. IS-K founding emir, *Hafiz Saeed Khan* (right), was killed in U.S. airstrike in 2016

■ **Strength:** Around **1,500-2,000** fighters. IS-K is based in Nuristan, Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, with sleeper cells in Kabul and other provinces

■ **Taliban links:** Analysts believe IS-K has strong links to *Haqqani* network – militant group based in Pakistan – which in turn is closely linked to Taliban

**But IS-K accuses Taliban of abandoning Jihad in favour of negotiated deal with U.S. over foreign troop withdrawals**



Picture of suicide bomber released by IS-Khorasan, Aug 26

■ **Attacks:** IS-K blamed for some of worst atrocities in recent years, targeting girls' schools, hospitals and even a maternity ward where pregnant women were killed



**Aug 26: At least 90 people, including 13 U.S. troops, killed in explosions near airport. IS-K claims responsibility**

Pictures: Newscom, IS propaganda image