

A 3/14

5/4/2011

Terminology

Petraeus: Taliban may loosen ties to al-Qaida

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The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The killing of Osama bin Laden may weaken al-Qaida's influence on the Afghan Taliban, the U.S. military commander in Afghanistan said Sunday.

Even so, Gen. David Petraeus warned that Afghanistan is still a potential refuge for international terror groups and that al-Qaida is just one of those.

Petraeus, who has been cho-

sen by President Obama to replace Leon Panetta as CIA director, said the strong link between al-Qaida and the Taliban was personal, not organizational.

"The deal between the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaida was between Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden, not the organizations," Petraeus said as he visited U.S. troops in eastern Afghanistan.

Petraeus said bin Laden's death may make it easier for

the Taliban to renounce al-Qaida, a condition for reconciliation talks set by NATO and the Afghan government.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the Obama administration have said they will negotiate with any Taliban member who embraces the Afghan constitution, renounces violence and severs ties with al-Qaida.

Informal contacts have been made in recent months with high-ranking Taliban figures,

but no formal peace talks are under way.

The two groups do not seem to be inextricably aligned.

While al-Qaida has backed worldwide terrorist attacks in the name of Muslim jihad, the Taliban have been mainly a nationalist movement aiming to regain control of Afghanistan.

The Taliban have claimed that rather than weaken their ties with al-Qaida, bin Laden's death would boost their fighters' morale.



U.S. Gen.
David
Petraeus