



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 17, 2012

Possible Assassination Attempt on Panetta Reported

"At no point was the secretary or anyone on the aircraft in any danger from this incident," according to a statement by the ISAF. Pentagon spokesman George Little, speaking to reporters in Kabul, said the vehicle burst into flames after crashing into a ditch. The vehicle struck and injured an ISAF official, Little said



"It is not yet clear whether the incident was a coincidence or Panetta was the intended victim of a targeted attack.," Press TV reported, *The New York Times* made a brief reference to the incident Thursday in an article about Afghan President Hamid Karzai's call for U.S. and NATO forces to end their combat mission in the country next year. The vehicle that crashed near Panetta's plane was a stolen pickup truck, the *Times* said.

Panetta's visit came after a U.S. soldier was arrested in connection with the murder of 16 Afghan civilians, including nine children, in Kandahar Province last Sunday. Panetta apologized to Afghan officials and promised President Karzai a thorough investigation. Karzai and members of the Afghan parliament have expressed anger that the soldier had been taken out of Afghanistan and flown to a U.S. base in Kuwait. The suspect, Staff Sergeant John Henry Bales, has since been moved to a cell in the medium security prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Panetta is also looking to work out an agreement with the Afghan government that would permit U.S. forces to remain in the country, training and assisting the Afghan military, beyond the scheduled withdrawal date of 2014.

Press TV also reported a Taliban attack on the US airbase in Bagram Thursday. Taliban spokesman Zabullah Mujahid claimed militants fired two rockets into the base, killing "many Americans," the Iranian news outlet reported.

Photo of Leon Panetta: AP Images

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