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## Afghanis working for foreign troops face Taliban threat, uncertain future



Translators working for Western forces in Afghanistan are facing uncertain times, according to Now Lebanon on Thursday.

Shamsuddin Noori, who has been working as a translator for the German Foreign Service over the past four years, shared the lives of German soldiers, laughed with them and came under fire with them.

In October, the German military will leave Noori's area, Kunduz. By the end of 2014 most foreign troops will withdraw from the rest of the country.

Noori knows that he will be a target once the troops are gone, especially if their withdrawal leads to a deteriorating security situation.

The Taliban are making concerted efforts to hunt down "collaborators of the enemy," and after working alongside foreigners for the past four years, Noori's face is well-known.

According to Now Lebanon, thousands of Afghani staff, who aid western forces in many capacities including translation services and medical care, face the same threat.

New Zealand, Canada, France and the U.S. have set up special visa services for those who "have experienced or are experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a consequence of employment" by foreign military forces, read a statement on the U.S. Department of State website.

Despite the program, many Afghanis who help the American military are left stranded.

According to The Washington Post, only 32 of the 5,700 visa applications had been approved as of mid-October 2012. The backlog steadily grows as the troop drawdown accelerates.

“When we started to work with the internationals, we thought that the future was bright, that the international troops would defeat the Taliban. But now we become more hopeless every day,” said Noori.

“The moment the international troops leave, the insurgents will hunt us,” he adds.

Germany, who’s Foreign Service employs Noori, has no protection visa program. Minister of Defense Thomas de Mazière has said that the highly qualified translators are needed in Afghanistan to continue developing their country.

Providing the means to leave the country would also contradict the narrative of improved security in Afghanistan, a narrative which allows foreign troops to withdraw sooner rather than later.

New Zealand, for its part, leaves its translators the option of moving country or receiving two-year’s salary.

“Nobody leaves his country voluntarily,” said Noori. “Your country is like your mother. But if your mother starts to threaten you, you only think about your survival.”