



blessing - and he will be hard to replace soon. His death could unleash a well of resentment among some senior Northern Alliance members, who accuse Karzai of colluding with the Taliban.

Already Afghanistan's ethnic minorities have begun to rearm in the face of negotiations with the Taliban, who are mostly ethnic Pashtuns, as is Karzai. Rabbani's killing is likely to accelerate that process and lay the foundation for a possible civil war once US combat troops leave the country or take on support roles by the end of 2014.

In Kandahar province, the birthplace of the Taliban movement, officials worried that the assassination would dampen peace efforts.

