

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024032460345 Published image copyrightAP The UN has dropped sanctions against former Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, paving the way for him to return to the country. The Afghan government asked for the move as part of a deal with Mr Hekmatyar and his militant group in September. The deal grants him immunity in return for support for the Afghan constitution and a promise to abandon violence. He fought the Soviet occupation but was later accused of shelling civilians. Mr Hekmatyar is also a former Afghan prime minister and his Hezb-e-Islami militant group is the second biggest in the country. He was forced to flee Kabul in 1996 when the Taliban came to power and in 2003 was designated as a terrorist by the US. Mr Hekmatyar's whereabouts remain unknown. He did not attend the signing ceremony in Kabul for the deal with the government. Under the UN Security Council move, his assets are unfrozen and a travel ban is rescinded. The 'Butcher of Kabul' - Virginia Gidley-Kitchin, BBC News image copyrightAFP As a guerrilla leader in the 1980s, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had air of icy menace about him that hinted at ruthless ambition, a characteristic he demonstrated to the full during the ferocious power-struggle that followed the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. He became known as the Butcher of Kabul for his faction's indiscriminate firing of rockets into the capital. The death and destruction this caused led many Afghans to welcome the takeover of the Taliban. Once one of the main recipients of western aid, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was deeply hostile to the west and was later accused by the US state department of supporting attacks by al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The deal between Mr Hekmatyar and the Afghan government was seen as being highly symbolic because it is the first to be concluded without UN or international mediation. BBC Afghan Service editor Waheed Massoud said Mr Hekmatyar appeared to have calculated that he would be more significant as a political leader in Kabul than as the leader of a group of fighters up in the mountains who are also competing with the Taliban for influence.