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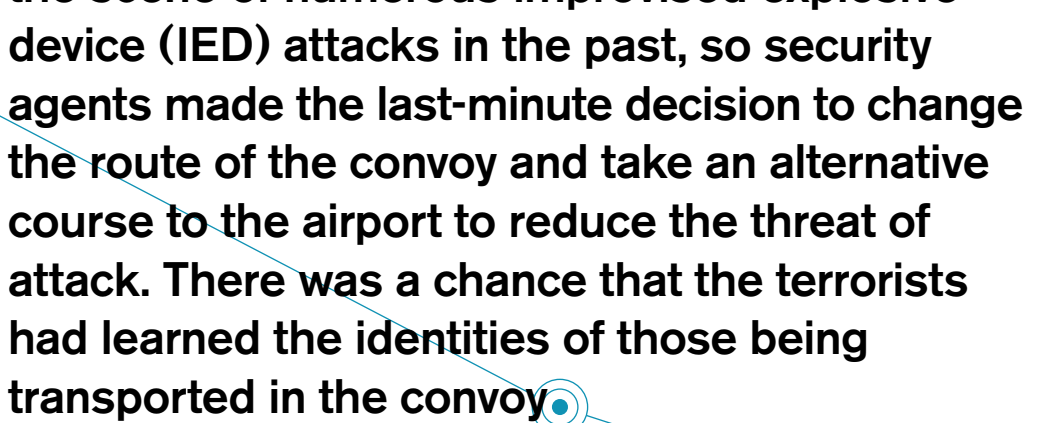
**Is**

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# Developing Worlds



**THE ROAD THROUGH KABUL.** Increased chatter prompted worries among security officials that Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives were planning attacks on the roads throughout Kabul. Those concerns were now being conveyed directly into the radio earpieces of the US Bureau of Diplomatic Security team as they drove a convoy of four armored Toyota Land Cruisers through the streets of Afghanistan's capital city on the way to Kabul International Airport. The main road to the airport had been the scene of numerous improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in the past, so security agents made the last-minute decision to change the route of the convoy and take an alternative course to the airport to reduce the threat of attack. There was a chance that the terrorists had learned the identities of those being transported in the convoy.



Traveling inside one of the armored SUVs, wearing a flak jacket, was Robert C. O'Brien, partner-in-charge of Arent Fox's Los Angeles office and co-chair of the US State Department's Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan. Sitting alongside Robert was his colleague in the Partnership, US District Judge David O. Carter. Both men had traveled to Kabul, along with State Department official Tim Nusraty to consult with Afghanistan's political and legal leaders on strengthening the rule of law in a nation torn apart by decades of war, tyranny, religious strife and tribal divisions.

#### **THE RULE OF LAW AND A BATTLE OF IDEAS.**

Arent Fox's O'Brien was appointed co-chair of the Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan by then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at a State Department reception in December 2007. "This historic partnership will benefit not only the people of Afghanistan but the people of the United States as we assist our friends in building a rule of law-based society in that critical region of the world," said Robert as he spoke before the distinguished international gathering of diplomats, journalists and attorneys, including Secretary Rice and the then-Attorney General of Afghanistan, Abdul Jabbar Sabit. "The Afghan people face a great challenge – reestablishing the rule of law throughout their country to ensure that all members of Afghan society – both citizens and rulers – are bound by a set of clearly defined and universally accepted laws. This effort is not without risk for Afghan prosecutors, judges and lawyers. Some have already paid the ultimate sacrifice in this noble cause to bring justice and equality to their people."

Since his appointment, Robert has spearheaded the Partnership's efforts to assist the democratically elected Afghan government in creating a new legal system that embraces fundamental

rights such as access to defense counsel and clearly defined rules of evidence and procedure.

The Partnership, which includes a number of the nation's leading law firms, has planned and held several training workshops for Afghan judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys, including a historic two-week program held in Los Angeles and Washington, DC, for 14 women lawyers from Afghanistan. Among the workshop's keynote speakers were former US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Under Robert's leadership, the partnership has placed an Afghan judge into a graduate law program in California and currently has a number of Afghan lawyers pursuing LLM degrees at Harvard and Washington and Lee law schools. The Partnership has secured commitments from more than a dozen US law schools to provide tuition-free training to Afghan lawyers, who will then return to their country, to bravely rebuild their country's justice sector in the face of threats from the Taliban. These future leaders of Afghanistan will help bring their nation into the international legal community.

In March 2008, Robert spoke at the United Nations headquarters in New York City to report on his fact-finding mission to Afghanistan and his meetings with Chief Justice of the Afghanistan Supreme Court Abdul Salam Azimi; Afghanistan's Attorney General; the executive director of the Legal Aid Organization of Afghanistan; members of the Afghan Prosecutors Association; and other officials.

"The Dag Hammerskjold Conference Room at the U.N.'s headquarters was overflowing that day with diplomats, legal experts and reporters," recalls Robert. "People are keenly interested in what is going on in Afghanistan. Everyone

## Justice Reform In Afghanistan

knows that it is essential to international security that we succeed in that nation and that it does not fall back into the hands of the Taliban and their Al Qaeda allies.”

“The war on terror is more than a military conflict. It is also a battle of ideas. The Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan through low cost/high impact justice reform projects seeks to undermine the tyranny that terrorism represents with the universal ideals of equal justice under law and respect for human rights,” Robert said. “I am proud to be a member of a firm that generously supports the courageous men and women of Afghanistan’s legal profession as they seek to build a better nation and a better life for their fellow countrymen.”



Photograph of Robert C. O'Brien (r.) and US District Court for the Central District of California Judge David O. Carter (l.) in Kabul, Afghanistan



Photograph of O'Brien (l.), Afghan Attorney General Abdul Jabbar Sabit (center) and US District Court Judge Carter.



Inside  
one of the  
armored  
SUVs,  
driven  
by armed  
agents,  
wearing  
a flak  
jacket,  
was  
Robert  
O'Brien.



WASHINGTON, DC – DECEMBER 13, 2007 – Robert C. O'Brien, managing partner of Arent Fox's Los Angeles office, speaks at a ceremony held at the US State Department in Washington, DC, to launch the Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan. O'Brien was appointed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to co-chair the partnership.

Also pictured (L-R): (i) Afghanistan Attorney General Abdul Jabbar Sabit; (ii) US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; (iii) Ambassador Thomas A. Schweich, US Coordinator for Counternarcotics and Justice Reform in Afghanistan.

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