US comes up empty in search for Omar

Cecile reportedly rides off; two other Taliban detained

By Elizabeth Neuffer and Colin Nickerson

KAUL, Afghanistan — Mullah Mohammed Omar, the leader of the Taliban, has announced that he will take no new deputy leaders, effectively ending his search for a successor.

The announcement comes after a series of developments that have raised questions about the future of the Taliban. The group faced a series of setbacks in recent weeks, including a failed attempt to negotiate with the Afghan government and a series of military setbacks.

In a rare public statement, Omar said that he will no longer accept new deputies, leaving his leadership structure in a state of limbo.

“Now we are in a difficult situation,” Omar said in a televised address. “We must focus on the internal struggle and not seek outside support.”

The move marks a significant shift for the Taliban, which has traditionally relied heavily on outside support to maintain its power. It also raises questions about the stability of the group in the absence of new leadership.

Omar’s decision comes as the United States and its allies continue to pressure the Taliban to engage in peace talks. The US military has been unable to make significant progress against the Taliban in recent months, and there are concerns that the group could gain strength if it is allowed to remain in power.

“We cannot allow the Taliban to recapture the power they once held,” said US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis. “We must continue to apply pressure and seek a political solution.”

The Taliban has not commented on Omar’s decision, but it is likely to be met with skepticism by some of the group’s members.

In a statement, the group said that it would continue to fight against the Afghan government and its allies, but did not specify what form that struggle would take.

“We are determined to fight to the end,” the Taliban said. “We will never concede to the enemy.”