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Press TV

## President Karzai under US pressure to sign partnership pact

3/6/2012

An Afghan official says the United States keeps pressure on President Hamid Karzai to sign a strategic partnership deal that will set the framework for US presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014, Press TV reports.

Ezatullah Safi, the deputy director of Karzai's media information center, said the intense pressure comes as the president demands an end to night-time raids by US troops in Afghanistan and a timeline for Afghans to assume control over the US-run detention centers.

There are increasing doubts on whether Washington and Kabul will be able to reach a long-term Strategic Partnership Agreement as US-Afghanistan relations have been heavily strained in recent weeks.

A senior Afghan government official, however, said on condition of anonymity that the US believes "Afghanistan does not have the ability or the international standards to run the prison and also insists that night raids can't be stopped overnight as it's a key tool against the insurgents."

The recent burning of copies of the holy Qur'an by US forces has further complicated the situation. It has triggered Afghan anger and demands for greater guarantees from the US, including the hand-over of US-run prisons.

"There have been a couple of sticking points. We are continuing to try to work through those and I don't have anything to report at this time with regard to completing the document or settling those two issues," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters.