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Reported channeling of CIA money to Afghanistan causing concerns among Afghans

by Abdul Haleem

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The report that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has secretly channeled money to the Afghanistan government has caused concerns among Afghans who believed that this is against the national interest of the country.

"The act of giving money by the CIA, if true, is illegal since this could influence the government into giving concessions to a foreign power," said Kabul University professor and political analyst Faizullah Jalal.

Jalal told Xinhua that the CIA fund, which he termed as "ghost money", promotes the culture of corruption and could be used to buy the loyalty of lawmakers, ministers and other influential figures in Afghan society.

In its issue of April 28, the influential U.S. newspaper, The New York Times, claimed that the CIA has handed over millions of U. S. dollars to the Afghanistan government for more than a decade now.

According to the report, the money had been packed in suitcases and dropped off every month at a designated government center.

The money may be used to beef up the Afghan security apparatus in the fight against the Taliban and other armed insurgents in the country.

However, Jalal said the CIA funds could also be used for other purposes aside from strengthening security facilities, such as in bribing warlords, opposition politicians and even the Taliban in order to get their support for some controversial measures such as the proposed security pact with the United States.

The Karzai government and the United States are now crafting a security pact that would allow limited American military presence in the country after the pullout of the NATO-led foreign forces from Afghanistan next year.

According to Jalal, it is not the first time that Afghanistan has received cash from a foreign intelligence organization. Providing cash to the Kabul government by British intelligence agency MI6 has also been reported by British newspaper the Guardian.

Karzai has acknowledged receiving money from the Islamic Republic of Iran but insisted that this was spent for palace expenditures.

Zalmaik Zabuli, a member of Mushrano Jirga, the upper house of the Afghan Parliament, said that President Karzai "should at least tell the nation where the CIA funds have been spent."

In their editorials, Afghan newspapers on Tuesday also called on the government to level up with the people on where the CIA money went.

"Afghan leaders need to remain committed to their constitutional and moral obligations and safeguard the national interests of Afghanistan," the English daily The Afghanistan Express said in its editorial.