

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

Reuter

Afghan president questions future of peace talks

By Mirwais Harooni

09/28/2011

Afghan President Hamid Karzai, long a staunch advocate of peace talks with the Taliban, on Wednesday questioned whether the insurgent group was able to seek a political settlement and blamed Pakistan for fomenting instability.

The Afghan president had met with Afghanistan's political and religious elite to discuss the future of peace negotiations after the assassination last week of the government's top peace envoy, former President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Rabbani's killer was a suicide bomber posing as a reconciliation envoy sent by the Taliban's leadership council, and Karzai's response to the attack marked an apparent shift in stance from a leader who when pushing for negotiations has described the Taliban as errant "brothers."

Karzai took a swipe at neighboring Pakistan, saying it was clear the Taliban leadership was not independent enough to make its own decisions about how it conducted the war, and suggesting talks with Islamabad instead.

"During our three-year efforts for peace, the Taliban has martyred our religious ulema (leaders), tribal elders, women, children, old and young," Karzai was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his office.

"By killing Rabbani, they showed they are not able to take decisions. Now, the question is (should we seek) peace with who, with which people?"

The meeting included tribal elders, legislative chairmen, cabinet ministers, former mujahideen commanders and his two vice-presidents, the statement added.

The death of Rabbani, the most prominent surviving leader of the ethnic Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance of fighters and politicians, had raised concerns that his assassination would not only scuttle the peace process but exacerbate ethnic rifts among Afghans fighting the Taliban.

Hundreds of Rabbani's supporters protested in Kabul on Tuesday against his killing, chanting "death to Pakistan, death to the Taliban" and demanding the government scrap plans to hold dialogue with the insurgents.

Rabbani was chairman of the High Peace Council, formed by Karzai in October last year to reach out to the Taliban.

Although the Council was considered more an official endorsement of negotiations than a real body for discussions, contacts continued through other channels, often involving foreign countries with a stake in Afghanistan's future.

Karzai announced in June that the United States had made contact with the Taliban but had yet to reach a stage where the government and insurgents were meeting.

TALIBAN USED "BY THE ISI"

Preliminary investigations into Rabbani's killing, presented to Karzai by the country's intelligence chiefs on Tuesday, said the attack was plotted outside Afghanistan and the Taliban's powerful Quetta Shura may have been involved.

Many Afghans have long accused Pakistan and its main spy agency, the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of backing insurgent groups to further Islamabad's own interests. Pakistan denies this.

Top U.S. officials also accused Pakistan of supporting insurgent groups active in Afghanistan, after a 20-hour attack on diplomatic targets in the Afghan capital earlier this month.

The outgoing chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, testified before the U.S. Senate last week that the Taliban-linked Haqqani network believed to be behind the siege was a "veritable arm" of the ISI. Pakistan and the Taliban have strongly rejected his claim.

Karzai said Afghanistan's efforts to improve ties with Pakistan had not been reciprocated.

"Pakistan did nothing to destroy terrorist strongholds, allowing them to train in its territory," he said.

"And now, if the Taliban is being used ... by the ISI, then Afghanistan has to talk with Pakistan and not the Taliban," he added.

After his killing, Rabbani's aides said a former Taliban member named Hameedullah Akhondzada, who had earned Rabbani's trust and claimed to be in contact with the Quetta Shura, had met with the former president on several occasions since June.

Akhondzada did not attend the last week's meeting and sent a last-minute replacement, who detonated a bomb concealed in his turban during an embrace as he greeted Rabbani.