

# 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](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

AP News

## Analysis: Assertive Karzai bewilders allies

KATHY GANNON

Nov 18, 2010

With the war at a critical stage, Afghanistan's president is publicly berating his NATO allies, criticizing military tactics and occasionally reminding them that they are not the only players in his country.

President Hamid Karzai's behavior has left his international partners bewildered as they try to decipher his motives — whether he's trying to provoke them, play to a domestic audience or ensure his long-term survival by portraying himself as no puppet of the American-led coalition. All this comes as the NATO alliance prepares to unveil plans that would keep international soldiers at the forefront of the combat role until 2014.

In his most recent outburst, Karzai demanded in an interview last weekend that NATO reduce its military operations and stop what the military believes is its most successful tactic, night raids against suspected Taliban leaders.

NATO's senior civilian representative in Afghanistan, Mark Sedwill, said Karzai's comments were unproductive, especially since they came days before a meeting in Lisbon that is meant to finalize the 2014 target date for a gradual transition of security to Afghan forces.

"Clearly it is not helpful," Sedwill said. "We have different perspectives, that's natural. It is much better if we work those different perspectives out in private."

Then, just ahead of a weekend NATO summit he will attend, Karzai met Wednesday with the top U.S. commander and said he supported NATO's military campaign and, reluctantly, its nighttime special operations raids, a senior NATO official.

The hourlong meeting Wednesday in Kabul between Karzai and Gen. David Petraeus, the senior NATO commander in Afghanistan, helped smooth over the controversy that followed the interview, said the official, who was among those briefed on the meeting. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the high-level discussion.

It wasn't the first time the mercurial Karzai has raised eyebrows and befuddled many of his supporters in the West.

Last August, Karzai stood beside Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the Iranian railed against the United States, and Karzai later admitted to taking bags of money from Iran. He accused the European Union and the United States of manipulating last September's presidential elections in an attempt to put his competitor Abdullah Abdullah in power.

More recently, he accused the United States of wasting billions of dollars meant for reconstruction and then announced he was shutting down private security firms that guard international aid organizations, forcing them to scramble for alternative, made-in-Afghanistan security.

Sedwill, the NATO representative, said it wasn't clear whether Karzai's recent comments were driven by a desire to pander to public opinion.

"I don't have a window into other men's souls," he said.

But Karzai's criticism is striking a chord among Afghans.

"There is a widespread feeling that things just don't add up," said Martine van Bijlert, co-founder and director of the independent Afghan Analysts Network. Most Afghans, she said, wonder "if the foreigners really came to fight the Taliban, with all their troops and money, why is the insurgency only getting stronger?"

The international community often cites security as their top priority, yet Afghans see them as a source of insecurity. The West wants to help rebuild Afghanistan, yet most Afghans bemoan the lack of reconstruction. NATO says they are in Afghanistan to help crush the insurgency, yet it is burgeoning. Another goal is to help bring stability and good governance, yet most Afghans see corruption as runaway and good governance a distant dream.

"There are a lot of misunderstandings," said van Bijlert. "Both see the other side as erratic, duplicitous, not honest about their own agenda."

Andrew Wilder, an analyst from the U.S. Institute of Peace who has spent decades in Afghanistan and Pakistan, said Karzai's attacks on the international community are seen by some as an attempt to divert attention away from mounting criticism over corruption in his administration.

"I think Karzai is quite skillful at using these confrontations over tactical issues, which end up consuming large amounts of time and energy of top international policymakers ... to distract attention from more important strategic issues that he does not want the international community dealing with."

Abdullah Abdullah, who lost to Karzai in the fraud-ridden 2009 presidential election and an opponent of Karzai's effort to make peace with the Taliban, said Karzai's second term in office is about his survival.

To survive politically, Abdullah said Karzai was seeking to enhance his image as a fierce nationalist.

"His main aim is to stay in power," Abdullah said. "Part of it is to emerge as a nationalist. He is trying to show Afghans, 'I am strong.'"