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US Ultimatum Fails, Afghan Troop Deal Remains Unsigned

By Jason Ditz

December 31, 2013

The Obama Administration's "end of the year" ultimatum for President Hamid Karzai to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) has now officially come and gone, and the BSA remains unsigned.

The BSA is designed to keep troops in the nation "through 2024 and beyond," and the administration had repeatedly warned through November and early December that all US troops would leave if Karzai didn't sign by the end of the year.

The threat failed, and the administration, anticipating as much, began to back off the deadline last week, insisting that they'd be fine with Karzai signing some time in January too.

Karzai aides suggested they saw the threat as an empty one to start with, and that 2013 saw NATO troops take a back seat while the Afghan military suffered enormous casualties means the narrative of the US as savior of the Karzai government no longer carried much weight.

Karzai is holding firm on his position, saying he will sign the BSA only if the US agrees to end drone strikes and night raids, and otherwise intends to simply wait until after his term ends in April, leaving it for his successor to decide.