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## As Afghanistan's Pakistan Talks Move Forward, US May Be Cut Out

By Jason Ditz

December 12, 2012

Despite tensions related to President Karzai's allegations of Pakistani complicity in a recent assassination attempt, the talks between the Afghan and Pakistan governments on a post-2014 strategy continue to **move forward quickly**, and it is increasingly apparent that the US is not part of the equation.

Plans to **cede** southeastern provinces to the Taliban in return for the end of the insurgency seem to be the centerpiece of the plan, with officials saying it is important to put an end to the insurgency as opposed to the Taliban.

The US is clearly going to be involved in post-2014 Afghanistan, as they have already signed a pact to keep troops in the nation through at least 2024. Military commanders have been recommending huge forces and assuming the war is going to continue as planned. With them cut out of the settlement, things may be quite a bit different.

Indeed, some officials are saying that President Obama is planning to **slash** the size of the occupation force after 2014, leaving 6,000 to 8,000 troops under some plans. US officials are trying to spin this as proof of the "progress" of the war, but with the US such an afterthought in the deal with Pakistan it seems more like the Karzai government just got a better deal than they had going with the US.

