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Karzai Wants Delay on US Pact, White House Issues Ultimatum

By Jason Ditz

November 21, 2013

Just one day after reaching an agreement on the terms of the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) to keep US occupation forces in Afghanistan for decades to come, President Hamid Karzai has urged the Loya Jirga to hold off approval of the pact until after his term in office ends in April.

Karzai suggested that the pact “should be signed when the election has already taken place, properly and with dignity.” It had long been believed that a deal wouldn’t be possible until Karzai’s successor was elected at any rate, though after the deal was reached US officials hoped the jirga would sign off on it early.

And now they’re demanding it. White House officials issued an ultimatum in the wake of Karzai’s comments, demanding that the Afghan government finalize the pact by the end of December, or risk the US leaving outright.

That threat ironically means a lot more to whoever wins the election in April than it will to the Afghan people, and by extension much of the Loya Jirga, as many resent the occupation and oppose its continuation unless under very strict limitations. Karzai’s successor would likely prefer the troops to stay to try to prop up his government, but whoever it is won’t be able to do anything about it until after the April vote.