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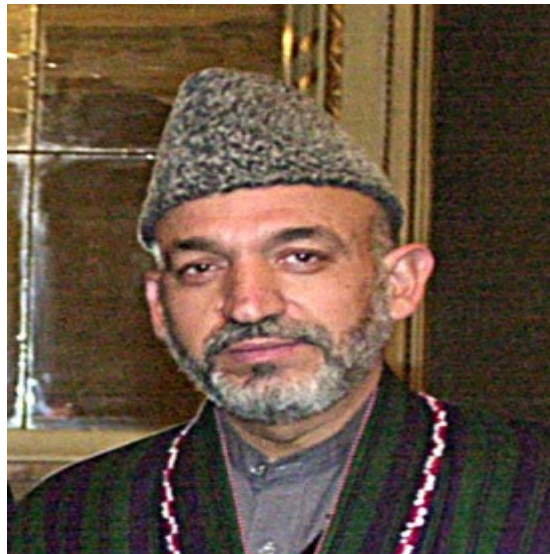
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Report: Bribery Costs Afghans Billions Every Year

By Jason Ditz

January 19, 2010

Though not given as high a profile by the NATO forces as the growing insurgency or the opium trade, a [new report suggests that corruption and bribery costs Afghans \\$2.5 billion every year, roughly a quarter of the nation's economy.](#)



The report, issued today by the UN, suggests that [doing virtually anything in the nation has a huge bribery cost associated with it](#), and Afghans have little legal recourse when officials come knocking, demanding a payout.

At least, no recourse to the US-backed government. [Many Afghans noted that Taliban government actually was considerably less corrupt than the current one](#), and this may point to the reason so many turn to Taliban shadow governments to solve problems.

The UN warns however that the [more pressing problem is that the corruption could bring down the Karzai government](#). It perhaps should not come as a surprise, however, as Karzai's own reelection came after a fraud mired first round of voting and political pressure led to the cancellation of the second round. The United Nations, so concerned by the corruption, was [interestingly enough implicated in a scheme to cover up the extent of Karzai's fraud](#).