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US Presses Karzai as Parliament Showdown Looms

By Jason Ditz

January 21, 2011

A [number of Western officials, but particularly within the US, are condemning Afghan President Hamid Karzai's attempt to delay](#) the seating of parliament to allow more time for investigations into the fraud in September's vote.

State Department [spokesman Philip Crowley demanded that Karzai allow parliament to convene "as soon as possible,"](#) while a UN statement chastized him for not respecting the "separation of powers."

The concerns are that with no parliament seated, Karzai is able to move essentially without any checks on his power (beyond the 150,000 NATO troops occupying Afghanistan, of course), but at the same time very real concerns exist about the September vote, which by all accounts was one of the most crooked in recorded history.

Where this will all lead is anyone's guess, but there appears to be little stomach for a new elections and even less for allowing the sort of reforms that would make such an election honest. A large portion of the "elected" parliament, such as it is, plans to seat on Sunday whether President Karzai approves or not.

This could lead to a major clash, and the prospect of security forces keeping parliament from seating. Karzai, who is in Russia at the moment, will return just hours [before the planned "unilateral seating" and has scheduled talks with some of the parliamentary leaders.](#)