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Could Karzai Become an Enemy of the West?

By Jason Ditz

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Tensions between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the Obama Administration seem to be growing by the minute, [with a weekend speech in which Karzai threatened to join the Taliban](#) fueling resentment on both sides.

Speaking with the [BBC today, Karzai reiterated one of his many accusations](#), that the United States had attempted to rig the August election as part of an international conspiracy to deny him a second term in office. The accusation has been particularly galling since Karzai won the election on the back of over a million fraudulent votes cast on his behalf, and the [Obama Administration defended](#) the decidedly crooked Karzai victory as “legitimate” from the start.

Increasingly [Karzai’s anti-West comments are followed up by angry anti-Karzai comments by the Obama Administration](#). Press Secretary Robert Gibbs expressed “frustration” with Karzai today, while the State Department [advised him to watch what he says in the future](#).

Karzai’s faux-outrage at Western interference is nothing new, but the first indication that this rift could be moving beyond rhetoric came today, when [Karzai canceled a planned visit to a NATO base in Kandahar province](#), a move US officials are calling a “victory for the Taliban.”

The increasingly bitter imbroglio comes as the US has been expressing growing disquiet over Karzai's refusal to tackle the widespread corruption in the nation, and as [Karzai's allies insist the allegations of corruption are an invention of the West designed specifically to discredit him.](#)

The issue seems to be finally coming to a head after nearly nine years of war as NATO eyes a massive military invasion of the Kandahar Province. Pentagon planners warn the invasion will require "wiping out" corruption in the provincial government, [which is dominated by Karzai's half-brother Wali Karzai. Despite warnings that he will cause "trouble" for the invasion, the Karzai government has insisted Wali will remain in place.](#)