



Written by on December 17, 2009

American UN Official Wanted Karzai Replaced

Kai Eide, the Norwegian diplomat who is the UN Special Representative to Afghanistan, has said his former deputy — Peter W. Galbraith, an American — wanted to seek U.S. government support to force Afghan President Hamid Karzai from office, the *New York Times* reported on December 17.



The British *Telegraph* newspaper reported that Eide wrote a letter in response to criticism of his work by the International Crisis Centre, a research organization and quoted an excerpt from the letter: "He told me he would first meet with Vice President Biden. If the vice president agreed with Galbraith's proposal they would approach President Obama with the following plan: President Karzai should be forced to resign as president."

Eide claimed that Galbraith wanted to install either Ashraf Ghani, a former finance minister, or Ali Jalili, a former interior minister, in Karzai's place.

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The *Telegraph* also quoted Eide's claims that he told his deputy the Galbraith plan was "unconstitutional, it represents interference of the worst sort, and if pursued would provoke ... strong international reaction."

The paper also quote Galbraith, who said that Eide's accusation was "obviously false" and part of a campaign launched against him after he accused his former boss of failing to address fraud during the Afghan election. "It is completely wrong," said Galbraith. "There was no such plan. It is an attempt to obscure the fraud issue, in which [I was] proven correct."

The *New York Times* reported, citing two unnamed senior UN officials, that Afghan President Karzai became irate when he learned of the plan, and when was told it had been proposed by Galbraith, who had obtained his position with the strong support of Richard C. Holbrooke, the top U.S. envoy to Afghanistan. There had been tension between Holbrooke and Karzai because the former had himself clashed with the Afghan president over the election.

The *Times* quoted Holbrooke's statement that he was not aware of Galbraith's plan, adding that "it does not reflect in any way any idea that Secretary Clinton or anyone else in the State Department would have considered."

Galbraith abruptly left Iraq in September and was fired weeks later. The *Times* cited Galbraith's statement that he believes he was dismissed because he was feuding with Eide about how to respond to what he termed "wholesale fraud" in the Afghan presidential election and he accused Eide of concealing the degree of fraud benefiting Karzai.



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A spokeswoman for the American Embassy in Kabul, Caitlin Hayden, told the *Times* that Galbraith had brought the plan to the embassy., but that it had been rejected, noting: "Mr. Galbraith was outspoken within the diplomatic community about his concerns regarding fraud and its consequences, and raised questions about various alternatives to the elections." The U.S. Embassy discouraged consideration of theoretical alternatives to the constitutional elections process whenever they were raised by any party, even while acknowledging flaws in the process."

Meanwhile, a Reuters news report cited an audit report by Arnold Fields, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, that was harshly critical of the High Office of Oversight, or HOO, established in July 2008 by President Karzai for the stated purpose of coordinating efforts to fight corruption. "The HOO suffers from serious shortcomings as an institution both in terms of its operational capacity and the legislative framework on which it is based," said the report. The report also stated that the "personal independence" of both HOO's director-general and deputy were impaired because they also served as advisers to Karzai.

"I believe that holding two government positions simultaneously, compromises the independence of the HOO and can, and in this case does, create a conflict of interest," said Fields.

On the eve of Karzai's inauguration, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton flew from Beijing, where she had been part of President Obama's Asian tour, to pay a visit to Kazai. Mrs. Clinton told reporters aboard her plane en route to the meeting: "We are asking that [the Karzai team] follow through on much of what they previously said, including putting together a credible anti-corruption governmental entity. They've done some work on that, but in our view, not nearly enough to demonstrate a seriousness of purpose to tackle corruption." She added, "We are concerned about corruption. We obviously think it has an impact on the quality and capacity of governance."

If our government is so concerned about corruption in Iraq, why did our military topple the regime of Saddam Hussein, who was no threat to the United States, without having a plan to fill the power vacuum? Saddam's departure was bound to create a power vacuum and such vacuums inevitably lead to corruption and in-fighting among factions fighting for control.

Ironically, that vacuum also enticed the Taliban to come into Iraq, where they had not been a significant factor under Saddam's rule. Supposedly, the Taliban were our *real* enemy, because when they ruled Afghanistan they had allowed the al Qaeda terrorists with a safe haven.

When he delivered his acceptance speech at a November 3 press conference — the day after Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) declared him the winner of the country's disputed election — Karzai issued an appeal to "to bring peace to this soil" and said that Afghans should "ask our Taliban brothers and others to return and embrace their own land."

Supposedly, the reason for our invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq was to *defeat* the Taliban, who had provided the al Qaeda terrorists with a safe haven. Now our government is spending billions of our taxpayer dollars to support a corrupt government that considers the Taliban its "brothers"?

Our foreign policy in the Middle East would be laughable, were it not so tragic.

Photo of Kai Eide: AP Images



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