



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 18, 2009

## Obama's Afghan Problem

Obama's decision also comes two days after Afghan President Hamid Karzai granted an [interview to the CNN show \*Fareed Zakaria's GPS\*](#), where Karzai indicated that no agreement on additional U.S. troops had been made:

Any addition of troops must have a purposeful objective that the Afghan people would agree with.... Any addition of troops, if agreed upon between the Afghan government and the U.S. government, must be in order to defeat terrorism and to protect Afghans and not cause them casualties. So this is a serious matter and I think the U.S. government should discuss this with us.



Based upon that interview, it's unclear that additional U.S. troops will even be welcome in Afghanistan. Karzai hinted that he did not want any more U.S. troops stationed in the interior of Afghanistan. "Not in our villages," he told Zakaria. "Definitely not in our villages." Rather, Karzai indicated he wanted them stationed on the Pakistani border. Karzai noted that U.S. troops had lost much of the goodwill they enjoyed in 2002, largely because of home invasions and civilian casualties. Civilian deaths [increased 40 percent last year](#) to 2,118 according to a United Nations study.

Karzai continued to support his close ally, Iran, during the interview, stating flatly: "Iran has been playing a very positive role, right from the Bonn Conference [in December 2001] until today."

But the interview [became high-charged](#) when Karzai charged the U.S. government with spreading lies about corruption in his government as punishment after expressing policy differences with U.S. officials. Zakaria asked this follow-up question to clarify: "Let me clarify, because this is a very important point, you are suggesting that because of political disagreements you have had where you have had objected to U.S. policy, some elements within the U.S. government, perhaps within the U.S. embassy or in Washington have been spreading this rumor. Is that correct?"

Karzai responded: "My conclusion is that yes, this was part of a political pressure tactic."

Even Zakaria — who is also an editor for *Newsweek* magazine — was floored by such a dramatic statement. "I've never heard a head of state make such a direct charge," [Zakaria said after his show](#).

*Photo: AP Images*



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