

Karzai Asks Pakistan To Arrest Taliban Officers

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Ahmed Rashid/ Islamabad.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has given Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf the names of several Taliban leaders whom he wants Pakistan to arrest because of continued attempts to undermine Afghanistan's government.

"We have given the names of some top Taliban leaders for the Pakistani authorities to take action on," Mr. Karzai said in an interview yesterday after concluding a visit to Islamabad. He said a longer list of names would be given to Pakistan soon.

Mr. Karzai said the list includes two former Taliban corps commanders, Mullah Dadullah Akhund and Maulvi Akhtar Usmani, and Taliban commanders Mullah Brader and Mullah Hafiz Majeed. All four men are believed to be close associates of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and al Qaeda terrorist network leader Osama bin Laden.

The four Taliban operatives are thought to now be living in Pakistan, following the Taliban's routing from Afghanistan by a U.S.-led military coalition after the al Qaeda-orchestrated terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Each man has a military record of having carried out massacres against minority ethnic groups in northern Afghanistan during the late 1990s.

Mr. Karzai and Mr. Musharraf also agreed to form a joint Afghan-Pakistan commission that will work to stop Taliban operatives based in Pakistan from crossing into Afghanistan. Senior aides to Mr. Karzai said that they believe Mr. Omar is hiding in Pakistan and that a Taliban regrouping has been carried out in Pakistan under his guidance. The whereabouts of Mr. bin Laden remain unknown, the aides said.

Mr. Karzai and Mr. Musharraf had an unprecedented meeting Tuesday, spending two hours alone together without their aides, in which the deal on the joint commission was reached. "Pakistan has to address this issue of extremism and if both countries can develop a proper strategy jointly in a strong and sincere manner then we can promote stability," Mr. Karzai said.

Mr. Musharraf echoed that sentiment when speaking at a state banquet on Tuesday. "The objectives of both the countries are the same," Mr. Musharraf said. "The threat and visualization of the concern is the same, therefore the strategic perception of the problem is the same."