

Transcript and translation of Karzai's press conference on 4 October 2012
(source: BBC Monitoring)

Afghan leader says security pact with US possible only when peace ensured

Addressing a news conference aired live by the state TV on 4 October, President Hamed Karzai, among other things, said that a planned a security pact with the USA will be signed only when peace is ensured in Afghanistan. He said that if the US wants to have a security pact with Afghanistan, it should honour its pledges. Regarding a strategic pact with Pakistan, Karzai stressed that it would be signed if certain conditions are met. These conditions are above all stopping the export of terrorism, suicide bombers, interference in internal affairs and causing destabilization of Afghanistan, he said. Karzai made it also clear that the next presidential election will be held as scheduled. He urged the Afghan media to remain vigilant against what he described as "psychological warfare" by the USA and its allies to weaken Afghanistan. This warfare is aimed at convincing the Afghan nation that their country will suffer if Western forces leave, he said and called on the Afghan media to avoid criticism which could damage the national interests of Afghanistan. The following is the text Karzai's remarks at the news conference aired live by the state-owned National Afghanistan TV on 5 October; subheadings have been inserted editorially:

[President Hamed Karzai in Dari]

Peace be upon you. Are you fine my sisters and brothers? I saw you were here so early this morning. You were here at 0900 [local time]. [In response to someone from the audience] You were here at 0730 hours, really? Why so early? Did you think the conference would be held so early?

On meetings during UN session in New York

[Karzai in Pashto] In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Welcome esteemed Afghan media, sisters and brothers. Good morning. I am sorry because you had to come so early due to security problems. As you know, I had some special visits, engagements and developments over the past some weeks. The most important visit was to the United Nations. Actually, I had no plans to attend the United Nations General Assembly session this year. However, I visited New York at the invitation of British Prime Minister [David] Cameron to attend the tripartite talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the UK. This was an important negotiation. Contacts and friendly relations with the neighbours and solution to problems with them are the most important and utmost objective of our foreign policy. When I went to New York, I held talks with them and had many other meetings. I also carried out some other activities. Let me first speak about our meeting with [leaders of] Pakistan and Britain during this visit. Asef Ali Zardari from Pakistan and David Cameron from the UK, the foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers in charge of political affairs of both countries were present at the meeting.

We discussed a document that was studied and shared by the three countries. The document proposed a policy. God willing, the policy on Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan and the world, the withdrawal of foreign forces by 2014 and beyond 2014 will be discussed. We held talks on short-term, medium-term and long-term activities. The most important

point at the meeting was how the two countries [Afghanistan and Pakistan] can initially cooperate with each other in the fight against terrorism and extremism which is the prior stance of Afghanistan and the first demand of Afghanistan. Once these objectives are achieved, there will be talks about how to improve relations in trade, economic ties and establishing strategic relations between the two countries. From Afghanistan's point of view, we are happy to have strategic relations with Pakistan. There should be strategic relationships with neighbours. However, there are some conditions and preconditions for strategic relations between us and Pakistan.

These preconditions are: First of all, our neighbours must stop the export of terrorism, suicide bombers, interference and all the other things which result in killing and disturbing the Afghan people's tranquillity and destabilizing Afghanistan. Once we are assured that Pakistan with which we want to have a friendly relationship meets these conditions - eliminates terrorism and extremism and stops the training and export of insurgency to Afghanistan - Afghanistan will be ready to work on this.

We also discussed economic, cultural and social relations at the meeting. However, we cannot move forward until terrorism, extremism and other activities against Afghanistan have been stopped. We will continue our negotiations on this and Afghanistan will present its conditions from time to time. We will work on the peace process both with the British and Pakistani governments. It is clear that when export of terrorism, extremism and bloodshed to Afghanistan is stopped, the peace process will start and other necessary steps will also succeed.

I also held talks with Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft, and praised his efforts for eliminating polio in Afghanistan. We also made some decisions as part of the [anti-polio campaign]. I also attended a conference on polio there. I also attended a conference on education. I held many other meetings with Agha Khan, Mr Brahimi and the Polish president on mutual relations and military training and equipment.

Furthermore, I had a comprehensive meeting with the US secretary of state, esteemed Hillary Clinton. At the meeting, we discussed mutual issues in detail. I especially discussed the psychological warfare launched by the Western and American media against Afghanistan. I also discussed this issue with US President Barack Obama in a video conference one week prior to my meeting [with Hillary Clinton]. I asked him why their media had embarked on a psychological war and propaganda campaign against a country and nation which they consider as their ally and want to be their friend and a strategic partner. If the objective of this propaganda campaign is to show that Afghanistan is weak and to undermine people's self confidence, this is what allies do not do. However, if its objective is the future agreements like the security agreement between America and Afghanistan on the number of US military bases, the number of its troops that will stay in Afghanistan and their immunity, it cannot achieve this objective through a psychological warfare against us and by weakening our position. Afghanistan will take into consideration its own interests just as it ensured its position in the strategic pact. Afghanistan will incorporate its interests in agreements with other countries whether it is America, Iran, Pakistan, India or any other country. Afghanistan will definitely achieve its interests and when it is confident that it can achieve its interests, it will sign the agreement.

Psychological warfare

The Western media have embarked on psychological warfare against Afghanistan to the effect that Afghanistan will lose its way after the foreign military withdrawal in 2014 or Afghanistan will go broke and will suffer after 2014 or internal fighting will erupt after 2014 or the Taleban will return to power. In my opinion, or rather let me say I am confident, this warfare is aimed at maintaining and promoting certain interests and pursuing objectives which are chosen by two countries. This is psychological warfare and we must stay vigilant and should show the other side that it cannot bully Afghanistan into giving up its interests because of such a psychological war. This country has a 5,000 years long history and let me say that it is a country of valorous people. Afghanistan will consider this, work for its interests and move forward.

I do not want to say much about the Western media because we now know them, though did not know them in the past. At first, we were not very familiar with the activities of the New York Times, the BBC and CNN and their political approaches to achieving their objectives. However, now that we have worked together with them, we know each other quite well. We do not know whether they know us or not, but we know them very well. We know that they have embarked on psychological warfare to show to us that we will suffer again if they leave our country. We admit that we need their support. Unfortunately, some of our TV channels, press and radio channels conduct the same propaganda campaign. Our analysts also conduct such propaganda.

Message to Afghan media

[Karzai switches to Dari] My message to Afghanistan's press, news agencies and TV channels is that as the people of Afghanistan, it is our duty to see that our media freely and openly express critical views about our internal affairs and the government's performance or any failure to fulfil its duties, just as the media in other countries. It is in the interest of the country that the media monitors government's activities so that it can avoid mistakes. Our media are free to make any criticism, as they have been in the past 10 years. You have the right to criticize the president or any other official and you should criticize them. Please make positive criticism - even it does not matter if it is not right and positive. However, as far as the national interests of Afghanistan are concerned, criticism of Afghanistan or the Afghan government should not be damaging to the self-confidence of the Afghan people. It should not hurt their optimism about their future. Therefore, you should differentiate between issues. It is not in our national interests to say that if foreign forces leave tomorrow, [foreign] investors will leave Afghanistan. Or if foreign forces leave, the Afghans will not be capable of protecting their country. This is a propaganda campaign against the Afghan nation. There is no doubt that the duty of the media in Afghanistan is to reflect the history of Afghanistan and the valour of Afghan nation to the people and show to them that they can protect their country as they have protected it in the past thousands of years. We need to promote awareness about this. But, meanwhile, an opposite campaign is being conducted. They [media] say that we will be nothing without foreigners. Are we really nothing without foreigners? Did we come into being as a nation in 2002 when the NATO forces came to Afghanistan or were we already a nation? It is my question for you. Were we not a nation before that? We are a nation that Pakistan has named its rockets after the Afghan national leaders. The name of one of Pakistan's rockets is Ghowri. Dear sisters and

brothers, can you please tell me where is Ghowr. Is Ghowr in America or in the UK or Russia, India or Pakistan? Ghowr is in Afghanistan. It is the centre of our country. It has also named its rockets after Ludi or Abdali. Abdali was in the recent past and it has not been even 300 years since Ahmad Shah Baba's [known as Abdali] reign. If we were really born with the arrival of America and other foreign military forces to Afghanistan 10 years ago and recently emerged as a nation, we may not be able to accomplish our missions in their absence. But, if we are a thousand-years-old nation and have history, demonstrated valour, defeated super powers of the world in our country [we should rely on ourselves]. We are not like other countries, which have been occupied, accepted occupation and then freed. But, we have buried super powers in our country. The international media call us the graveyard of empires. But, the Afghan media say that Afghanistan will wander if foreigners leave. Please take a look at your past and the self-confidence of the Afghan nation. We should tell people that Afghanistan will become self-reliant after 2014. I strongly believe that this country will make progress with dignity if there is national unity. Those businessmen and investors, who have come with America, will go back. It does not matter if they go back. However, those businessmen and investors, who earned money here and belong to this country, will stay here. We will move forward. Security situation has improved wherever the Afghan forces have assumed security responsibilities from foreign forces. People's living conditions have improved there. The brothers, who are present here, have witnessed that foreigners visit me and ask where I want to live when my tenure has ended and another president elected. They offer me residence in their country and say they will try to appoint me as the head of an international institution. But, I have told them that I want to live in my country. I will purchase a house in Kabul. I will live here and bring up my children here. God willing, they will study here and will serve their country.

Purpose of holding news conference

If they offer us the whole world, we will not exchange it with a small part of our life in this country and a small place in our soil. I have held this [news] conference especially because of this. There was a time when the media outlets were always criticizing our police and army. Although they achieved martyrdom in defence of their soil, the media was making propaganda that the police were corrupt and also criticizing the army. In other countries, when a soldier is killed, their president and public attend his funeral. When the national interests of Afghanistan which are the country's stability, national unity, economic growth, economic strength and democracy are put forward, those individuals, who speak on TV channels, should not only defend them but should also publicize them - whether it is right or wrong - to continue and strengthen them. Make whatever propaganda you can to increase and strengthen trust of our countrymen and youths, so that this country can move towards a better future.

On presidential election

The second issue is the upcoming election in Afghanistan, the presidential election. I am saying, as the president, with full certainty and my commitment to the Afghan constitution and respect to democracy and free vote of the Afghan people that we will go towards the presidential election in 2014 and then to parliamentary elections. So, the Afghan elections will be held on its due time as stipulated in the Afghan constitution. No event, security incident and no foreign propaganda can prevent the elections in Afghanistan. This is because each election, even if it is defective, is better than an illegitimate government. So in 2014,

when my legal term in office as the president ends, at that time, Hamed Karzai will not be the legitimate president of Afghanistan not even for one more day and I will be no longer a legitimate president. Even if the elections are defective, the election of a new president in Afghanistan is in the interests of this country and in the interests of legitimacy of this system. Therefore, elections will certainly be held and will be held on due time. If the election commission takes one or two months, it is not a problem but elections will certainly be held and a new president will be elected. Also, you should all seek your candidates and introduce everyone you like, so that the Afghan people can vote for them.

We want elections for the Afghan people. I have frankly talked to the foreign leaders about this and told them not to interfere in our elections as they did in previous presidential and recent parliamentary elections. After the presidential elections in 2009, it might have been proven to them that they cannot impose their plan on the Afghan people through interference. Therefore, we want free elections in which neither the Afghan government nor foreigners interfere and the Afghan nation should cast their free and independent votes to those who they like. We want an election that we can afford its expenses. The elections that foreigners organized for us over the past decade were the elections that even some countries such as India cannot afford. The elections in India with 1.2 billion population were less costly than the elections in Afghanistan with 28 to 30 million population. In total, 500m dollars have been spent only on the voters' registration programme for the elections. For God's sake, it is inadmissible and unfair. So we want to hold our elections according to our living conditions, ability and our economy and hold the elections properly. Neither should others use our elections as a tool to interfere in our country nor international bodies should use our elections [as a tool] to become rich and misuse it. So it is very clear how elections should be held in Afghanistan both in terms of expenses and the nature of elections. Also, the election commission is responsible to hold the elections on time and with full freedom and independence.

If Afghanistan continues the election process through a commission which is trustworthy for the people of Afghanistan and which is independent and without any interference either by the government or parties, groups, tribes or individuals, our country will make its way towards democracy such as India, and God willing, we will go towards a successful future with a government, be sure about it.

I think these were the two important issues from me today. Although I have other issues to discuss, I am sure we will face them during the process of questions and answers. It is said that when we discuss an issue, we have to go into its details. So I will discuss them during my remarks and answer your questions. So please ask your questions and let Ariana TV ask its question.

[Correspondent, in Dari] Thank you. Mr president, I am Abdol Qadir Mirzai from Ariana TV.

[Karzai, in Dari] Welcome Mr Mirzai.

About attack on US base

[Correspondent continues] The issue of the attack on the American base in Helmand Province has remained a puzzle. How can five or 10 suicide bombers attack a base located in a flat terrain and cause casualties and financial damage of such an extent in a base of a

country such as the USA. What are the results of the investigations launched by the Afghan government and the international forces on how the attack happened? Thank you.

[Karzai, in Dari] The government of Afghanistan has not launched its own independent investigation into this incident, as it was exclusively British and American base and the Afghan forces are not present in the base at all. The base is in a desert. Thus, the government of Afghanistan is not aware as to what is going on inside the base. However, it is natural that we are in the picture about what is going on in areas surrounding the base, and our own environment. The importance of your question is somewhere else. The importance of your questions lies in the fact what whether it was a terrorist attack arranged outside, or was it an attack planned inside? The attack on the base confirmed our stance again that the war against terrorism should not be fought in the villages and houses of the Afghan people. It has been proved that the terrorists were not trained in the villages and houses of the Afghan people, nor have they been sanctuaries of terrorism. America and NATO should go and fight terrorism in the area from where it originates. Even yesterday one of the senior American officials told a think-tank in the USA that terrorism is trained in Afghanistan's neighbourhood and that the terrorist sanctuaries are outside Afghanistan. However, the USA is not prepared to go to the terrorism nests and take action there. Thus, there is a policy of double standards. There is a discrepancy between words and deeds. In other words, they urge a thief to rob a house while at the same time telling the owner to safeguard his home. This was the reason that years ago we reached the conclusion that from Afghanistan's point of view, the current war against terrorism will not succeed if it continues in the manner that they are carrying out. On the contrary, NATO and Western officials actually do not call the war they have launched in Afghanistan as the war against terrorism. They call it the war against insurgency. In English, it is called insurgency, and our stance is clear that if this is a war against insurgency then it is an internal issue of Afghanistan and why you are bothering yourselves here. Let us and the armed opponents either fight or make reconciliation. What do you want to do between the two Afghan sides with your army numbering thousands, and why are you fighting the war between the Afghans? If the war is against terrorism, then terrorism is not here and the centre and funding source of terrorism are rather somewhere else, and you must go there. This has been the cause of the difference of opinion between us and them since the beginning and this difference of opinion still exists and has not been solved yet. And the difficulties we have in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan stem from the fact that [the West] say one thing and do something else. And given the attack carried out on the base of the Americans, there is no doubt that they [the Western powers] reached the conclusion, and they should have reached the conclusion before. If they still deny and do not do what they must do, there is no doubt that the Afghan nation is no longer prepared to make more sacrifices in this path. The Afghans have made much sacrifice. I said this very clearly in my speech at the United Nations. I said that Afghanistan has made the biggest sacrifice in the war against terrorism and this sacrifice must be respected, and the war against terrorism must be fought in a way that could lead to victory. Unfortunately today the war is not fought that way.

On signing strategic pact with Pakistan

[Woman correspondent in Pashto] Mr President, I am Baharat Saber, Voice of America correspondent. You said in your remarks that the strategic pact with Pakistan will be signed only after the latter stops sending terrorists to Afghanistan.

[Karzai] Yes.

[Correspondent continues] However, in the past nine or 10 years, the Afghans have been seeing that almost all the destruction are caused here by Pakistan. Now the question is whether you will wait until Pakistan stops sending the terrorists, if yes, for how many years will you continue to wait? If you do not wait and sign the strategic pact, will it not further increase the gap between our government and the nation?

[Karzai in Pashto] As I said the pact would be signed if our conditions are met and our conditions are that terrorism must be dealt with, training and dispatch of radicalism to Afghanistan should be stopped, the activities which are against Afghanistan should be stopped, the destruction of Afghanistan should be stopped and friendship should begin. I mean real and true friendship should begin. At the moment, we are trying to forge friendship with that side, but this has not happened yet. The pact will be signed only if our conditions are fully met. Once terrorism and radicalism are eliminated, peace returns to Afghanistan, mutual respect between the two countries based on independent relations is ensured and we become confident that suicide bombers, terrorists, bullets and bombs are not sent. In that time there is a need for another long process based on which we reach an agreement for signing the strategic pact. Now it is very early to talk about this. It is just an aspiration, and there are many obstacles on the way of achieving this aspiration, and it is not Afghanistan that has caused these obstacles. We want our neighbouring and friendly country Pakistan to remove the obstacles so that the two nations achieve the aspiration of having close, sweet and advantageous life.

On security pact with USA

[Karzai in Dari] Good if we give a chance to journalists in the second row; the one sitting in the middle of the second row.

[Correspondent in Pashto] Thanks a lot Mr President. I am Asadollah Ludin, a reporter of Radio Azadi [Radio Liberty]. You earlier talked about the security pact with the USA. How much did the USA, or in particular, Hillary Clinton take seriously the issue of the permanent military bases in Afghanistan in the security pact? Also, can you tell us when will this security pact be signed? Thank you.

[Karzai in Pashto] We stipulated in the strategic pact we signed with them six months ago that to go through the process of the implementation of this pact, there is a need to sign a security pact. What does the security pact mean? The security pact means that talks will be held over legalizing the presence of American forces in Afghanistan on whether its forces will operate under the Afghan laws or they will be immune from Afghanistan's laws and operate under their own laws. This is a very important issue, and the preliminary phases of talks between Afghanistan and the USA have begun on this issue. The other issue is that they [the American military] want bases here. They will ask for the bases for 10 years. And as how many bases they want, in which parts of Afghanistan, how many soldiers they will keep here, how the relations of the bases with outside will be, what the authority of the Afghan government will be in these bases, whether Afghanistan's flag will be hoisted in these bases, whether we will rent these bases to them or they will use the bases based on another deal.

These are the issues we need to hold detailed talks about based on which the pact will be signed. However, the most important issue is the issue of legalization of the presence of the American forces here, and this is important for the Afghan nation, especially because we have started signing strategic pacts with the USA and other countries with the hope that Afghanistan will be peaceful and that this cooperation will bring peace and security to Afghanistan. We signed the pacts with the hope that peace will return to Afghanistan and real war will be launched against terrorism and their sanctuaries. However, the people of Afghanistan have not yet achieved this aspiration. If the USA wants to sign the security pact with Afghanistan, Washington must meet its commitments to Afghanistan which is security, stability and fraternity of people in Afghanistan and this can happen only with joint cooperation and friendship. One cannot achieve this objective through psychological war. We will agree on the security pact only after the people of Afghanistan say that they enjoy security and will enjoy more security in the future and if Afghanistan's security is taken into account and the future interests of Afghanistan are considered and that the security pact will bring about what the Afghan people expect. If this happens, I will go and stand in front of the Afghan nation and say that, dear brothers and sisters, the security pact will serve our interests and let's sign it with them. However, if the conditions are not met I cannot give any justification to the Afghan nation about the implementation of pact.

On issue of compromise

[Karzai, in Dari] From the second row.

[Correspondent in Pashto] I am offering my greetings first. I am Mojib Lehaz from Zhouwandun TV. Mr President, you are successful in paying overseas trips, holding meetings with foreign officials and signing strategic pacts with them. However, inside the country your policy is said to have failed. The war is still going on, there is corruption in the government and you also promised the lower house of parliament that you will no longer continue the policy of compromise and instead move towards the rule of law. However, compromises are still taking place. How long will this situation continue, and will you continue your policy of compromise in the remaining one and a half years of your term in office, or will you take steps towards the rule of law?

[Karzai in Pashto] We are always moving towards the rule of law and will never ignore the law. It is the task of every government and system to implement law. In every country the law is implemented in an environment. There is an environment for the implementation of the law in every country. You remember that when we started the new life 10 years ago in Afghanistan there were four or five types of Afghan currencies in the market. Groups and warlords were using their own banknotes. Foreign countries in Europe were printing banknotes for each group in Afghanistan. Afghanistan did not have a single police and army. Afghanistan did not have an administration. There was no constitution. There was no education and schools. There were no roads. People were not able to go from one village to another village of Afghanistan. We have united all of them. Today the country has national army and police. One flag is hoisted in every corner of Afghanistan. There is only one Afghan currency in circulation across Afghanistan. There is rule of law here. The law is implemented as much as the government and the state can. Administration is improving with every passing day. Thousands of young people are receiving training abroad. Ten million dollars of the Afghan budget is provided to these young people to get education abroad. All these

have been made possible for us through some political decisions.

If we consider the big and small loss of a compromise, which one you will choose? If we are supposed to make a choice between big benefit and small loss, which one you will choose? This is the question of the compromise. Today Afghanistan is the home of all the Afghans. In one of my meetings yesterday, mojahedin leaders enjoying Islamic knowledge were sitting on the one side while members of the Khalq and Parcham [former communist] factions were sitting on the other side of the same table. Do you call it the rule of law or compromise? Is this compromise something wrong or good? In other words, should we do everything through the use of force or through negotiations and gathering people? I received students of the Education University yesterday and they had an objection as to why I have named the university after Martyr Ustad [Borhanoddin Rabbani]. I talked to them for three hours or more. The meeting began at 1100 in the morning. There were 20 students. We held wholehearted talks and gave reasoning. I heard their remarks during the meeting. The students were made up of very intelligent boys from across Afghanistan. The students were young people from Ghawr, Baghlan, Laghman, Ghazni and Maydan Wardag provinces. Is the president of a country required to devote three hours of his time attending a meeting with 20 young people at this sensitive time? The student's request can also be met outside the Presidential Palace. The minister of higher education, the university dean and there are other bodies that can solve their problems. In normal situations and in countries where life has become normal a president never devotes three hours of his time to such an issue. An American president never devotes three hours of his time to such an issue. The American president, the Indian prime minister or the Russian president never have lunch with people everyday. In our situation compromise means the action that serves the interests of the country. The media talk about compromise but do not know what it means. Compromise means good thing. So, I will certainly continue the policy of compromise on the issues that serve the interests of all Afghanistan. Rest assured, I will compromise even after the end of my presidential term. At the same time, we will also do what the law suggests. I will continue both approaches until I prepare the ground for the next elections. Once the elections are held and a new president is elected, I wish the next president will do what I did during his 10 years of office. After 10 years of term in office of the next president, the government will find the ability to run this country based on the law and citizenship right where the law will be implemented on everybody. Today the law is not implemented on everybody. If we implement the law on all, there are still people engaged in bullying and oppression and both benefit from the government and are meanwhile engaged in undermining the government. It is easy to take action against such people, but when it comes to the consequences of such an action, I use compromise.

[Karzai, referring to Tolo TV correspondent, in Dari,] Let's give sisters the chance. Although the question you will ask is already known, I still give you the turn.

[A female correspondent, in Dari] Thank you. I am Shakila Ebrahimkhel from Tolo. My question is not always the same. I belong to the people of Afghanistan and I strongly respect anything done for the national interests.

[Karzai, in Dari] Your question has been the same in the past years.

[The correspondent] No. Never. You can see. As you are aware, Pakistan's shelling is a violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty as it is launching aggression on Afghanistan's borders. The Pakistani security forces have even threatened people to leave their homes. The people are looking forward to you first. What actions have you taken against this flagrant aggression? Also, did you mention this at the UN General Assembly? What actions will you take after this? You talked about experts. Right, but it is the senior government officials who have also caused part of the concerns for people. Senior officials live here while their families and children are outside Afghanistan. You better know that most of the government officials have dual nationality.

[Karzai, in Dari] Disclose their names.

[The correspondent continues] Dear president, you know them.

[Karzai] You are trying to have all the job done by me.

[Correspondent, speaks and laughs] Yes. The other thing is that we, the media, cannot do anything against them.

[Karzai, in Dari] You can at least disclose their names.

[Correspondent] The other thing is about the peace process. Those who have joined the peace process recently whipped a girl or a woman in areas controlled by the government. The unofficial trial of people still takes place. In Ghazni Province, a girl under 18 has been whipped, but the government has so far been silent. Would you please tell your views about this? Thank you.

Pakistan's missile attacks

[Karzai, in Dari] We have taken all the necessary actions in dealing with Pakistan's shelling. It is true that the missiles are unfortunately fired on Konar Province. The government of Afghanistan has seriously requested Pakistan to deal with it. We have also seriously shared this concern with the USA. The USA has clearly told us that it is not prepared to defend [Afghanistan against the shelling]. Even American officials did not become ready to accept that missiles land with the scale Afghanistan claims. At meetings with us, American officials say that your reports of media and intelligence bodies are exaggerated and are not accurate. However, the reports we receive from the area prove what our security bodies tell us. We have contacted Pakistan about this issue through diplomatic channels. The foreign minister of Afghanistan mentioned the shelling at the UN Security Council. I myself mentioned this issue in my speech to the UN General Assembly. In the joint statement issued by Afghanistan and the USA yesterday, this issue was again raised by Afghanistan. We have taken these measures and will continue. The government of Afghanistan is providing assistance to those affected by the Pakistani shelling. However, if you mean by word action similar military response, we have not showed such a response yet. This is because Pakistan is shelling villages from the other side of the Durand Line. We will never shell villages and homes of people from this side of the Durand Line. We see homes and villages on the other side of the Durand Line as our own tribe and people. This was one reason. The other reason is that ordinary people and civilians live on the other side of the Durand Line. Afghanistan will fight the war against armed forces and not ordinary people. If armed forces are supposed to fight the war against armed force, in that case Afghanistan will take action as per the clear order

of the president. However, the situation has not developed to that level nor do we want to reach that level now. God forbid, I hope the situation will not deteriorate to the extent that Afghanistan and Pakistan enter into a war. We expect that Pakistan should be careful and not drag Afghanistan into a war. We will never shell civilians and people's homes on the other side of the border in response to the Pakistan's artillery attacks on our soil. We see people on the other side of the Durand Line as ours. They are ordinary people, and given its ethnic relations with this side of the border, Afghanistan will not shell the other side of the border.

Regarding Goshta and Lahlpura [districts of Nangarhar Province reportedly shelled by Pakistan recently] our delegation comprising the ministers of interior and defence visited the areas the same day we learned about the issue. They visited the site and collected information. Fortunately, the situation was not as tense as reported in the media. We sat with people and the people showed very strong morale -the spirit of defending their soil. The government is sending aid there. Our [military] units are present there, and the two ministers have returned from there and assured us. Right?

Protecting women

Your second question was about the oppression taking place in some villages and rural areas of Afghanistan, and there is no doubt that this is taking place. We have taken action in areas we have learned about and we will keep taking action.

The Afghan nation has the right to expect its government to defend the young Afghans, especially our women, and also defend their rights. We have defended and will continue. [Correspondent's voice is indistinct. She asks the president to answer other part of her question]

On families of officials living abroad

[Karzai] Have government officials caused the concern here, or have they not brought their families from abroad? There are two groups. One group of officials work in the Afghan government but do not bring their families from abroad. This is very bad. I have told most of the government officials to bring their families to Afghanistan from abroad. Those officials whose families are outside Afghanistan should now listen that not only the president but also our media are critical of this issue. They should bring their families to Afghanistan as this move will also serve their interests. The weather is better here, the living is better and the environment is more pleasant. They should bring their families to Afghanistan. This serves our interests. However, there is a lot of difference between the propaganda against Afghanistan that this country is not moving towards stability and the fact that family members of a government official live outside Afghanistan.

[Karzai, referring to the woman correspondent] However, just mention if you can name government officials whose family members live abroad and are meanwhile engaged in propaganda. I will promptly dismiss those officials. I am not aware about any officials doing this. If any officials are doing this, just disclose them and leave the rest to me. It is your task to disclose them and it is my job to dismiss and punish them. Right? Is there any official whose family lives abroad and is meanwhile engaged in propaganda against stability? If you find them, please disclose them.

On changing governors

[Correspondent] I am Mirwais from Reuters News Agency. There are some unconfirmed reports in the Afghan and foreign media that you like to either dismiss or reshuffle a number of provincial governors, including the governors of Balkh and Nangarhar. To what extent is this true? My other question is about Mr Zakhelwal. What is the result of investigations into his case and to what extent were the allegations against them true? Thank you.

[President Karzai] The process of government reshuffling is part of the routine activities of all governments. Civil servants of Afghanistan one day serve in one province and the other day in other province. This is something routine in governance in all societies and governments. At the moment we do not have any decision to change the governors of Nangarhar and Balkh, nor have any talks been held on this. However, bringing changes to the administration of Afghanistan is something normal and routine, and people must look at this from this perspective.

On finance minister's case

About Mr Zakhelwal, his case has been referred to the Attorney General Office of Afghanistan. I talked to the attorney general yesterday and he is waiting for the High Office of Oversight and Administrative-Corruption to send documents to the Attorney General's Office. Mr Zakhelwal himself sees the allegations against himself as politically-motivated, and he said that all the documents against him were untrue. He himself has handed over documents to the Attorney General's Office. My last meeting with the attorney-general was about this issue last evening who said work is continuing on the minister's case.

More on Pakistani missile attacks

[Karzai, addressing journalists] It is enough. I think your questions have ended. You asked old questions which means there is nothing new to ask.

[Correspondent] Thank you. I am Mohammadollah Mohammadi from Kyodo News Agency. You earlier said in response to the question of our colleague about the Pakistani shelling that you would not shell civilian areas, while the missiles landing in Afghanistan are fired from the Pakistani military bases. Can you say whether the government of Afghanistan does not have the ability to respond similarly, or are you helpless?

[President Karzai] Good question. Good question. You touched on the very important point. The government of Afghanistan does not have the weapons to hit back the areas where the attacks are carried out from. In the strategic pact between Afghanistan and the USA the latter committed itself to defending Afghanistan's soil against foreign aggression until Afghanistan finds the ability to defend itself independently. We asked this question from the USA. As I said, the USA is not prepared to even accept that such an attack has taken place. The Americans say that these reports are inaccurate and it is not clear where the missiles are fired from. The Americans are not prepared to fire at the areas from where the attacks have begun. We, the government of Afghanistan, do not want to hit back at civilians in our response fire. We will never do this. Thank you for seeking this clarification.

[Karzai] It is your turn, young man.

[Correspondent] Thanks Mr President. I am Naderi from Tamadun TV. As you said in your reply to our colleague that the USA is not prepared to accept that the Pakistani missile attacks are true, then what will be the fate of the Afghan government's investigations? Is this not a violation of the strategic pact by the USA? Thank you.

[President Karzai, in Dari] Well, our investigations clearly show that the artillery attacks and shelling take place from the Pakistani side. There is no doubt about this. Local people, our ministries of defence and interior have reliable reports about this. The provincial officials have accurate reports about this. However, based on this pact, the USA says it is not true that the attacks are carried out with such an extent. The USA also says that the attacks are not worth responding. Thus, it has been nearly two months since we have started holding major meetings with generals of the Ministry of Defence and army of Afghanistan on how to achieve the goal of equipping itself. We asked the USA to equip our air force with fighter jets, reconnaissance and transport aircraft, but the USA has not yet responded to our request. Our debate which will continue next week is that will Afghanistan wait if the USA and NATO do not provide us with the equipment, or will Afghanistan, use any of its power, start purchasing the equipment from China or Russia or India or other countries? And if Afghanistan needs artillery, tanks, armoured and the heavy weapons that help us to properly defend our soil and if the USA does not provide us with these weapons, should Afghanistan continue waiting because of the strategic pact and relations with the USA, or should we take action ourselves? This is part of the debates we have launched a long ago. I did not want to talk about this issue now, but we will come to this debate later and God willing we will provide you with information about this in an appropriate time and let you know about the decision Afghanistan will take. Most probably, we will decide that if the USA is not able to properly equip us then the USA must not prevent Afghanistan and the Afghan government itself should do its job and purchase the needed equipment. Thank you and welcome.

Source: National Afghanistan TV, Kabul, in Pashto 0500 gmt 5 Oct 12