



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 6, 2012

Afghan Intel Chief Nominee Accused of Torture and Drug Trafficking

The man nominated by Afghanistani President Hamid Karzai to be the new head of Afghan intelligence allegedly participated in drug trafficking and torture, [CNN reports](#). Citing testimony given by a Canadian diplomat, the story published September 4 by CNN recounts Asadullah Khalid's alleged history of "heavy handed tactics" and facilitation of the drug trade. Karzai's nomination of Khalid, currently the minister of border and tribal affairs, to lead the National Directorate Security (NSD) has stirred controversy in Afghanistan and elsewhere.



[Agence France-Presse](#) (AFP) reports, "Ahead of his nomination by Karzai late Sunday, the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) urged the president not to appoint Khalid, accusing him of rights abuses and graft.

"Numerous and credible reports allege that Asadullah Khalid, while governor of Kandahar province and in other posts, commanded forces that committed grave human rights violations," HRW said in a release quoted in the AFP story.

Richard Colvin is the former Canadian deputy ambassador to Afghanistan and the man identified by CNN as the source of most of the worrisome revelations about Khalid's past. Colvin observed Khalid during the latter's term as governor of the Kandahar province from 2005 to 2008.

Regarding Colvin's testimony, David Ariosto of CNN writes:

In 2009, Colvin testified before Canada's parliament that his team had uncovered "very credible" evidence of torture being used by Afghan authorities in Kandahar, which allegedly included Khalid's direct involvement.

"He was known to us very early on, in May and June 2006, as an unusually bad actor on human rights issues. He was known to have had a dungeon in Ghazni, his previous province, where he used to detain people for money, and some of them disappeared," Colvin said in his testimony. "He was known to be running a narcotics operation. He had a criminal gang. He had people killed who got in his way."

The Canadian diplomat also testified that "in Kandahar we found out that [Khalid] had indeed set up a similar dungeon under his guest house."

"He acknowledged this. When asked, he had sort of justifications for it, but he was known to personally torture people in that dungeon," said Colvin.

Colvin participated in an inquiry conducted by the Canadian government regarding the alleged mistreatment of detainees turned over by the Canadian military to Afghan government officials in Kandahar, including Khalid.



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AFP reports that during an interview on [Afghan TV station Tolo News](#), Khalid denied the allegations.

“I reject it. It’s all baseless and it’s an attempt to undermine Afghan personalities,” he said.

If confirmed, Khalid would replace Rahtamullah Nabil. President Karzai removed Nabil in late August. After the announcement of Nabil’s removal from office [the BBC reported](#):

Mr Karzai’s office said a decision had been taken to limit the term of the office to two years.

However, there are reports that Mr Karzai was unhappy with the agency’s performance in combating the militant Taliban movement.

The office of the head of National Directorate Security has somewhat of a revolving door.

In 2010, Nabil’s predecessor Amrullah Saleh left the post because of disagreements with Karzai over the president’s effort to involve the Taliban in peace negotiations.

Regardless of Khalid’s reproachable human rights record, Karzai’s suggestion that he could fill the vacancy at the top of the NSD may not be on the level.

CNN quotes senior fellow Stephen Biddle at the über-influential Council on Foreign Relations as saying, “This is classic Karzai, and trial balloon floating. It could be to placate Tajiks. But it’s also entirely plausible that he’s floating an idea that he expects to be shot down,” he added, according to CNN.

“In Afghan politics, these things are often four levels of gamesmanship,” said Biddle in the CNN story.

Although this bureaucratic appointment process and the controversy surrounding it may be sport to Hamid Karzai, [the death of over 2,113 American soldiers](#) in Afghanistan since 2001 is not a game.

Photos: (Left) Hamid Karzai at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, 2009; (right) Asadullah Khalid in front of Rahman Baba High School in Kabul in 2011



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