

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, November 5, 2011 9:51 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: U.S. general fired for criticizing Hamid Karzai (Washington Post)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Saturday, November 05, 2011 07:29 AM
To: NEWS-AF; NEWS-Mahogany
Cc: SES-O
Subject: U.S. general fired for criticizing Hamid Karzai (Washington Post)

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan (Washington Post) - One of the top American generals responsible for training the Afghan security forces was fired Saturday for criticizing President Hamid Karzai and his government.

Maj. Gen. Peter Fuller, the deputy commander for programs at the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, based in Kabul, was relieved of his duties by the top commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John R. Allen, after comments Fuller made to the news website Politico.

In the Thursday interview with Politico, Fuller took issue with Karzai's recent statements that Afghanistan would side with Pakistan in a war with the U.S., calling Karzai's statement "erratic."

"Why don't you just poke me in the eye with a needle? You've got to be kidding me.... I'm sorry, we just gave you \$11.6 billion and now you're telling me, 'I don't really care?'" Fuller said.

"When they are going to have a presidential election, you hope they get a guy that's more articulate in public," Fuller added to Politico. He made the remarks in the United States, where he was attending a conference. He had planned to return to Afghanistan this weekend.

Fuller described Afghan officials as divorced from reality and unappreciative of the American sacrifice in Afghanistan.

"I said, 'You guys are isolated from reality.' The reality is, the world economy is having some significant hiccups. The U.S. is in this [too]," Fuller told Politico. "If you're in a very poor country like Afghanistan, you think that America has roads paved in gold, everybody lives in Hollywood. They don't understand the sacrifices that America is making to provide for their security. And I think that's part of my job — to educate 'em."

Fuller was fired, effective immediately, for these "inappropriate public comments," the coalition statement said.

“These unfortunate comments are neither indicative of our current solid relationship with the government of Afghanistan, its leadership, or our joint commitment to prevail here in Afghanistan,” Allen said in a statement. “The Afghan people are an honorable people, and comments such as these will not keep us from accomplishing our most critical and shared mission — bringing about a stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.”

Fuller had spent most of the past two decades overseeing weapons programs for the Army in the United States rather than leading combat troops. He arrived in Afghanistan in June, where he focused primarily on helping the Afghans field new armored vehicles and improve processes for getting spare parts, food and fuel to combat units.

Fuller could be reassigned to another job in the Army, but it is more likely that he will be asked to retire.

This is the second time a senior American officer in Afghanistan has been fired for comments to the press. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the former top commander in Afghanistan, was fired last summer over a Rolling Stone magazine article that criticized Obama administration officials.

There has been regular tension in recent months between the Afghan government and U.S. military officials over how much money and equipment America will supply to the Afghan security forces in coming years. Afghan officials have asked for tanks and fighter jets, among other weaponry and equipment, which U.S. military officials have deemed too expensive. The issues also have been a sticking point in the negotiations over a strategic partnership between Afghanistan and the U.S., with the Afghans intent on extracting the greatest price from the United States in return for allowing long-term bases here.

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