NATO WILL CRY THROUGH THEIR PARTY WITHOUT GUEST OF HONOR

Remember that as recently as the beginning of last week, Hamid Karzai still clung to the illusion that yesterday was the date on which Afghanistan's new president would be sworn into office. Yesterday was a very important deadline because tomorrow, NATO begins their summit in Wales. For over a year, this particular summit has been circled on many calendars as the time when Afghanistan's new president would revel in having signed the new Bilateral Security Agreement and begin to benefit from the ~~graft~~ flow of training and weapons coming from a residual NATO force now immunized against charges in Afghan courts and eligible to remain in the country past the end of this year. With no new president emerging yet, today's Washington Post reports that NATO is going ahead with their summit, even though there will be a notable absence:

> A gathering of leaders from NATO countries this week was supposed to be an opportunity to celebrate the close of the alliance's long war in Afghanistan and to embrace the country's new president.
>
> But it's hard to have a party without the guest of honor.
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> Despite smiling promises to Secretary of State John F. Kerry last month, two rival candidates to succeed Afghan President Hamid Karzai have failed to resolve a disagreement over a review of disputed election results in time to declare a winner. As a result, there will be no Afghan head of state at the NATO summit in Wales.

Gosh, John Kerry just can't understand Abdullah Abdullah. Why can't he be the man Kerry was, and, "for the good of the country", go ahead and concede in the face of evidence the election was stolen from him? Alternatively, why didn't Kerry insist that Afghanistan's Supreme Court just select a winner in the election dispute, so that the country can "move on"? After all, that worked out so well for the US (and, indirectly, for Afghanistan) in 2000.

NATO's Secretary General managed to hold back on his tears long enough to issue a statement picked up in the Post story:

> NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen made the best of a disappointing situation at a news conference Monday.
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> "We have done what we set out to do," Rasmussen told reporters in Brussels. "We have denied safe haven to international terrorists. We have built up capable Afghan forces of 350,000 troops and police. So our nations are safer, and Afghanistan is stronger."

Who needs international terrorist groups when you have home-grown ones? The Taliban had this to say to NATO:

> The Taliban militants group in Afghanistan touted the group's role as trouble shooters, bridge builders and problem solvers in a bid to ally the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's concerns.
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> Taliban following a statement released ahead of the NATO summit in Wales, claimed that the group is the true representative of the Afghan people.
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> The statement further added that the group can play a central role in resolving the ongoing crisis of Afghanistan.

> “The Islamic Emirate has arisen out of this nation and shared in all its toils and sacrifices. Due to this the Afghan nation has firm belief in the Islamic Emirate,” the statement by Taliban said.
>
> Taliban called for an end of foeign [sic] military occuption [sic] in a bid to end the crisis in Afghanistan and inisted [sic] that complete withdrawal of foreign forces is the only successful solution.

Afghanistan’s ToloNews tries to put the best face on the summit taking place without a new president:

> The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit is scheduled to be held this Thursday and Friday on September 4-5 in Wales where the 28-nation alliance will discuss and decide the financial and security assistance to Afghanistan.
>
> Representing Afghanistan will be Afghan Defense Minister Gen. Bismillah Mohammadi, given that a president has not been elected yet.
>
> Afghan political analysts hope that the absence of a new president will not change NATO’s stance on Afghanistan and continue to be committed to the country after the formation of a national unity government, stressing that the summit will significantly impact the nation’s future.

The article even does a bit of lobbying ahead of the summit:

> The NATO Chicago conference had pledged to provide $4.1 billion to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); however the Afghan government has announced that the overall financial obligations of the

> forces are currently about $6.1 billion.

Gosh, even as Afghanistan melts down, ~~graft~~ training and arming Afghan troops remains a growth industry.

The real tears are left for the final sentence of the story:

> This year’s summit has been called the most important conference in the past 70 years.

Poor NATO. They’re hosting the most important party in 70 years and yet they have no boyfriend to bring to it. Go ahead, NATO. You can cry if you want to.