US WANTS BSA SIGNATURE NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES

On the very same day that a member Congress stated that Middle Eastern cultures routinely lie during negotiations, several US senior officials suggested dishonest ways of working around Hamid Karzai's conditions for signing the Bilateral Security Agreement by getting someone other than Karzai to sign it.

Granted, Duncan Hunter, Jr. is batshit crazy and also was arguing for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in a war with Iran, but his statements on honesty yesterday provide a supremely ironic context for John Kerry and Chuck Hagel suggesting someone other than Karzai could sign the agreement. TPM has Hunter's comments:

> Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) said Wednesday that it is in the Middle Eastern culture to lie during negotiations.
>
> "In the Middle Eastern culture, it is looked upon with very high regard to get the best deal possible no matter what it takes — and that includes lying," Hunter said in an interview with C-SPAN. "That's one reason that these Gulf states like to work with the United States — because we're honest and transparent and we have laws that we have to live by."

Hunter and his ilk, of course, would point to Karzai's new conditions imposed after the loya jirga approved the BSA and urged Karzai to sign it. But is the US acting any differently than the actions Hunter criticizes in its attempt, at any cost, to get a work-around?

From the Washington Post:

> The Obama administration is looking for ways to work around Afghan President

> Hamid Karzai's new demands concerning a key security agreement with the United States, a senior U.S. official close to the negotiations said Wednesday.
>
> "One of the things we're trying to do quietly is design, engineer, imagine ways that we could get ourselves out of this fix," the official said in an interview, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to describe the emerging strategy on the record. "One of those ways might be to find a mechanism, a technique where Karzai could abide by his loya jirga pledge not to sign it but still give us the document we need."
>
> Secretary of State John F. Kerry suggested this week that someone other than Karzai might sign the security deal. Possibilities include the top Afghan and U.S. defense officials, although U.S. officials played down that option after Kerry spoke.
>
> But in Washington on Wednesday, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel also suggested to reporters at the Pentagon that the signature of an Afghan leader other than Karzai might suffice.

And Martin Dempsey has also joined the Coalition of the Working-Around:

> Dempsey said it was important that any agreement be binding. "As long as the document is considered legally binding by both parties and credible internationally, then I think it will be a matter of who they decide signs it," he said.

The attempts to bypass Karzai are not being received well in Kabul. From Khaama Press:

> Aimal Faizi, spokesman for president

> Hamid Karzai has said that the Afghan ministers will not be authorized to sign the security pact unless the demands are met.
>
> Mr. Faizi further added that president Hamid Karzai remains committed to his two main demands to sign the agreement. “President Karzai wants an absolute end to the military operations on Afghan homes and a meaningful start to the peace process, and we are certain that the Americans can practically do that within days or weeks,” Faizi quoted by Reuters said.
>
> He also added, “As long as these demands are not accepted, President Karzai will not authorize any minister to sign it.”

There is one more very important tidbit buried near the end of this article. It turns out that the US didn’t merely mention getting someone other than Karzai to sign the agreement, it has already approached the Afghan defense minister to try to persuade him to sign it:

> According to reports, US officials have also approached Afghan defense minister Gen. Bismillah Mohammadi during the NATO foreign ministerial meeting in Brussels to discuss such a possibility.

Hunter couldn’t have said it any better. The US wants this document signed, no matter what it takes.