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Subject: Afghanistan urges Pakistan to take steps for peace (AP)

KABUL (AP) The Afghan government needs to see Pakistan make "tangible progress" on pledges to use its influence to help end the Taliban insurgency, a foreign ministry spokesman said Sunday.

The statement came a day after Afghan President Hamid Karzai said he was giving up on trying to talk to the Taliban directly and that the key to ending the war is mediation by Pakistan.

It underscores the Afghan officials' deep frustration over their inability to deal with a major barrier to ending the war in Afghanistan _ insurgent havens across the border in Pakistan.

Already tense Afghan-Pakistani relations have been further degraded in recent weeks as U.S. and Afghan officials have publicly blamed the Pakistani government for supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan following a string of high-profile attacks.

"Afghanistan has invested a great amount of goodwill and political capital to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence and to try to improve relations with Pakistan over the past three years," the spokesman, Janan Mosazai, told reporters in Kabul.

"Unfortunately, we have not been witness to the type of concrete progress that we were expecting _ that was promised to us by our brothers and sisters in Pakistan," he added.

For his part, Karzai has suspended a series of trilateral meetings between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States because of the fallout.

"When it comes to specific examples of tangible progress that we would like to see, it is facilitation of direct negotiations with the Taliban leadership and with any other insurgent leaders who are prepared to join the Afghan national reconciliation process," Mosazai said.

Mosazai said an Afghan delegation would travel to Pakistan to discuss the peace process and the allegations that Pakistan had a role in the recent assassination of former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani. He originally said the delegation might leave as early as Sunday but later said it was unclear how soon they would depart.

A statement on Sunday from Karzai's office said a special commission investigating Rabbani's death had concluded the attack was planned in Quetta, the Pakistani city where key Taliban leaders are based. The delegation also said the primary assailant was a Pakistani citizen.

The commission told Karzai it had already passed the evidence on the Pakistani authorities along with names, addresses and phone numbers of people in Pakistan involved in plotting the assassinations. The statement said the commission expects the Pakistani government to make the necessary arrests.

Pakistani analysts said the breakdown in relations between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the U.S. has dire implications for any potential peace settlement with the Taliban, which all sides have said is the only sustainable way to end the Afghan war.

"I don't think anyone is in the mood for talks right now," said Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani journalist who has written extensively on the region.

Rashid said he thought Karzai was playing to the American gallery because the mood in the Obama administration and Congress was allegedly anti-Pakistani. The only potential for the reconciliation process to move forward would be an improvement in U.S.-Pakistan relations, something that doesn't seem likely in the near future, said Rashid.

"You need a breakthrough between the U.S. and Pakistan so they can convince Karzai to resume" talks, said Rashid.

There is debate over how much influence Pakistan actually has with the Taliban, but most analysts believe that the country is vital to the success of any peace talks.

"My own sense is that Pakistani influence and connections and its clout is largely exaggerated," said Riffat Hussain, a professor of defense studies at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad. "But if there is any player who can act as a bridge to bring these guys on board, it has to be Pakistan." Specifically, he said, the powerful Pakistani intelligence service must be involved.

On Sunday, NATO forces said in a statement that an international service member died Saturday in a bomb attack in southern Afghanistan. The military coalition did not provide further details.

At least 43 international service members have died in Afghanistan in September, the majority of them American forces.

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