

# *Karzai Rules out Inking BSA before Leaving Office*

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Kabul, March 26 (RHC-Xinhua) -- Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Wednesday utterly rejected rumors suggesting he would sign the controversial Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with Washington before he steps down to allow presence of a limited number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan after pullout of NATO-led troops from the country by the end of this year.

"That is not true. That is not true," Karzai replied in an exclusive interview with Xinhua to query that he will sign the Bilateral Security Agreement before his five-year term expires on May 22nd.

According to the country's constitution, Karzai has to hand over the power to his successor on May 22nd and his successor should take office on May 23rd.

Karzai said he would sign the pact only if the U.S. agreed to support meaningful peace talks with the Taliban, stop searching civilian houses and ensure transparent elections.

"If the Bilateral Security Agreement guarantees peace in Afghanistan, if it guarantees a genuine fight against terrorism, then it is good for Afghanistan and for the region," Karzai said.

He added: "But if it does not bring peace to Afghanistan and if the war on terrorism continues to be done in a manner as it is done today with continuing bloodshed of innocent people in Afghanistan and in the region, then the signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement will be of no interest to Afghanistan. And that is why I have conditioned the signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement on peace in Afghanistan and stability in this region."

Washington had urged outgoing Karzai to sign the controversial security agreement before the end of 2013, warning that failure to sign the pact would mean that U.S. forces completely leave the country.



**Radio Habana Cuba**