

Ahmad Karzai: From dishwasher to drug kingpin

By [Eric Walberg](#)

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Afghan President Hamid Karzai's younger half-brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, was killed in Kandahar on 12 July during a gathering in his house, according to Kandahar's Canadian Governor Tooryali Wesa. He was shot in the head and chest with a AK-47 fired by Sardar Mohammad, a former bodyguard to another Karzai brother Qayyom.

The 50-year-old Ahmad, a restaurant worker in Chicago before catapulting to fame on Hamid's shirt-tails, was appointed chairman of the Kandahar Provincial Council in 2005. A ruthless autocrat, he was widely despised, and escaped multiple assassination attempts in the past, but his death nonetheless comes as a major blow to President Karzai in the homeland of the Taliban, and will set off a vicious power struggle to fill Ahmad's shoes.

US ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neumann, the CIA's station chief and their British counterparts pleaded with the president in 2006 to exile his brother, accused of drug dealing. Hamid angrily rejected these accusations and Ahmad stayed in place, rigging the 2009 Afghan presidential elections for him, as he continued to amass wealth, extorting kickbacks on construction contracts, even shaking down bus- and truck-drivers at police posts.

Whatever they thought of him, the American military readily rented properties he specially confiscated for them, including the former residence of Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Omar. The CIA paid him to organise several mercenary forces to help them kill Taliban, even as he was working with the Taliban behind the scenes. He had the support of US Senator John Kerry and even General David Petraeus: "President Karzai is working to create a stronger, more secure Afghanistan, and for such a tragic event to happen to someone within his own family is unfathomable."

Resentment against the king of Kandahar was long ready to explode, and his murder was welcomed by Kandaharans and Taliban alike. Though he unwittingly recruited even more Taliban than he helped kill, Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi was happy to take responsibility for sending him on his way: "Today in Kandahar city, Hamid Karzai's brother was killed during Operation Al-Badr. Ahmad Wali Karzai was punished for all his wrongdoings." Qari's comrade Mullah Adam Haji concurred: "Ahmad Wali was the best US friend and the Taliban's worst enemy. He and his whole family have the blood of thousands of Taliban on their hands. His death is very good news for us."

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Canadian Eric Walberg is known worldwide as a journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. A graduate of University of Toronto and Cambridge in economics, he has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s. He has lived in both the Soviet Union and Russia, and then Uzbekistan, as a UN adviser, writer, translator and lecturer. Presently a writer for the foremost Cairo newspaper, Al Ahram, he is also a regular contributor to Counterpunch, Dissident Voice, Global Research, Al-Jazeera and Turkish Weekly, and is a commentator on Voice of the Cape radio. Eric Walberg was a moderator and speaker at the Leaders for Change Summit in Istanbul in 2011.

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