

The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the Establishment of US-NATO Military Bases in Afghanistan: Iran opposes US-Afghan security pact

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, December 06, 2013
[Indian Punchline](#)

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The Iranian Foreign Ministry [statement](#) on Tuesday advising Kabul not to proceed with the signing of the proposed status of forces agreement [SOFA] with Washington leading to the establishment of the American and NATO military bases in Afghanistan comes at a defining moment.

The Iranian stance has also been articulated at the level of the powerful chairman of the Majlis foreign and security Policy commission, Alae'ddin Broujerdi, which bears the imprimatur of the highest level of leadership.

The MFA statement openly acknowledged that Tehran has made a demarche with Karzai. Indeed, Iran's deputy foreign minister [Ebrahim Rahimpour visited Kabul](#) a fortnight ago and was received by Karzai.

It is conceivable that Tehran decided to take an open stance after assessing that Karzai is coming under immense American pressure. The Iranian statement comes on the eve of a crucial meeting of the NATO foreign ministers at Brussels later today.

Clearly, the NATO has jumped into the fray, with secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen [threatening](#) that the alliance will exercise the "zero option" if Karzai didn't sign on the dotted line.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council is also due to be held later today, which will be attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Moscow has too many pots boiling at the moment — Syria, Ukraine, missile defence — and often what happens during 'East-West' cogitations is that pragmatic trade-offs ensue.

Washington is taking a [cautious line on Ukraine](#) by taking care not to offend the Kremlin; it has manifestly made way for Moscow to take the lead on Syria; and it is keeping the missile defence on the backburner (for the present, at least.) although it ignores the Russian grievances.

Conceivably, Obama administration will expect some Russian reciprocity on the two issues that matter critically to the US geostrategy, namely, Afghanistan and Iran.

The MFA in Moscow has taken a [partial stance](#) with regard to the SOFA, highlighting merely

the “need to ensure a proper international legal framework for the planned presence of NATO in Afghanistan” and promising that “The Russian party will point out the importance of setting up cooperation by the Organisation with the CSTO again.”

Clearly, Moscow is pursuing certain specific Russian interests in the Afghan situation. Having said that, Moscow’s actual influence on the Afghan situation is also debatable. Moscow’s ploy will be to play into the Afghan endgame through the backdoor of the UN Security Council where it is a veto-holding permanent member.

Whereas, amongst the regional players, what matters infinitely more to Karzai than the Russian stance will be the cooperation of Pakistan and Iran as well as China — and to an extent India. No doubt, against this backdrop, Karzai’s visit to India on December 13 assumes [special interest](#).

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