



Ahmed Wali Karzai, the most powerful man in southern Afghanistan, may maintain links with drug dealers and insurgents, as some American officials and Afghans believe. And he might have played a central role in last summer's fraudulent presidential election, as Western diplomats charged.

But Mr. Karzai is also the brother of the Afghan president, Hamid. And after debating Ahmed Wali's future for months — and with a huge military operation in the area looming — Afghan and American officials have decided that the president's brother will be allowed to stay in place.

Senior American officials spent months weighing the allegations against Ahmed Wali Karzai: that he pays off Taliban insurgents, that he launders money, that he seizes land, that he reaps enormous profits by facilitating the shipment of opium through the area.

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