



Afghan military investigators have accused Ahmed Wali Karzai, U.S.-backed President Hamid Karzai's controversial half-brother, of intervening to protect powerful allies who are squatting illegally on government property in southern Afghanistan.

In response, Ahmed Wali Karzai shut down the Kandahar legislature this week by refusing to lead the provincial council until he can clear his name.

"The shura is not going to do anything until this thing is cleared up," he told McClatchy in a telephone interview Monday, referring to the 14-member council. "If they can find one thing in this report that is true, I am ready to accept any kind of punishment."

The eight-page Defense Ministry report comes as American strategists are counting on the Kandahar kingpin to be a key ally in the evolving U.S.-led effort to drive the Taliban out of their spiritual capital and bolster a pro-Western government there.

However, the latest dispute pits Ahmed Wali Karzai, a member of Afghanistan's dominant Pashtun ethnic group, against the local Afghan army corps commander, who's considered an ally of a rival Pashtun leader, and against the defense ministry in Kabul, which is largely controlled by Tajiks from the northeast of the country.

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