

THE WORLD; Karzai Keeps Key Rivals Out of His Cabinet; The Afghan president gives top portfolios to technocrats who had lived in the West. But he appoints a warlord as energy minister.

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

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UNUSUAL TEAM: Afghan President Hamid Karzai, left, appointed renegade warlord Ismail Khan to his Cabinet.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Ahmad Masood; UNUSUAL TEAM: Afghan President Hamid Karzai, left, appointed renegade warlord Ismail Khan to his Cabinet.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Shah Marai

FULL TEXT

After weeks of intense deliberations, Afghan President Hamid Karzai emerged Thursday with a Cabinet of mostly technocrats returned from the West that excluded key rivals.

A government official read the names of 27 Cabinet members on state-run television, ending two weeks of speculation over the country's fragile future and Karzai's newly attained power.

Karzai, who won the presidency in the country's October election, dropped Defense Minister Mohammed Qassim Fahim, a commander of the Northern Alliance that helped drive the Taliban from power. Younis Qanooni, who stepped down as education minister to run against Karzai, was also left out of the new administration.

Abdul Rahim Wardak, an ethnic Pushtun and a former army general trained in the United States, was named the defense minister. He was a deputy defense minister in the interim government and a major force behind the United Nations' disarmament program.

A third and more neutral Northern Alliance figure, Abdullah, retained his post as foreign minister.

"This is quite a radical shift from the previous Cabinet. Karzai has presided over dismantling the Panjshiri military influence," said Vikram Parekh, a senior analyst in Kabul, the capital, for the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank.

Karzai, however, fell short of his promise not to include warlords in his new Cabinet. Ismail Khan, whom Karzai removed from the governor's post in Herat, has been appointed minister of energy.

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The Ministry of Interior, another powerful post, remained in the hands of Ali Jalali. To keep his job, Jalali must renounce his U.S. citizenship. The new constitution forbids ministers from holding dual citizenship.

At least seven other ministers have dual citizenship. The issue was a major point of contention because many ministry candidates were expatriates who had returned from Europe or the U.S.

"Dual nationalities create two classes of ministers; a second passport is like an insurance policy. It means that the government ministers haven't sufficient trust in the future of the country," said ousted Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani, who had returned from the U.S.

Ghani was replaced by Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, who as the central bank governor had been praised for establishing a new Afghan currency and rebuilding the country's banking system.

A constitutional requirement that all ministers have college degrees also proved controversial. Under pressure to include former commanders with only military credentials, Karzai took the issue to the country's Supreme Court, which refused to override the law.

Although many believe that the higher-education rule was an indirect way of eliminating warlords and commanders from the government's higher ranks, some of Karzai's Cabinet members think that was a tall order for a country emerging from 23 years of instability.

"There are mujahedin soldiers and commanders that didn't get the chance to go to college but who are qualified leaders," said Amin Farhang, the new minister of economics. Farhang previously headed reconstruction, which was consolidated with planning into the Ministry of Economics.

Other changes included the addition of a Counter-Narcotics Ministry. This comes on the heels of a major U.S.-led effort to curb poppy growing.

Two women were included in the Cabinet -- one of them Massouda Jalal, who ran against Karzai. She will head the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Analysts say Karzai has done a good job of representing Afghanistan's various ethnic groups in his Cabinet, but it is apparent that the top jobs have gone to his own community, the Pushtuns. Wardak, Jalali and Ahady are ethnic Pushtuns.

Once elected, Afghanistan's parliament will have the right to veto ministerial appointments.

Illustration

Caption: PHOTO: UNUSUAL TEAM: Afghan President Hamid Karzai, left, appointed renegade warlord Ismail Khan to

his Cabinet.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Ahmad Masood; PHOTO: UNUSUAL TEAM: Afghan President Hamid Karzai, left, appointed renegade warlord Ismail Khan to his Cabinet.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Shah Marai

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