

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
December 2011

The UK is engaged in Afghanistan as part of a 50-nation coalition to prevent international terrorists, including Al Qaeda, from again using Afghanistan as a base from which to operate, threatening our security and that of the region.

The Government has committed itself to keeping Parliament informed about developments in Afghanistan on a monthly basis. This thirteenth report covers progress in December 2011. It reflects the combined assessment of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development.

The Rt Hon. William Hague MP
Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs

Overview

At the Bonn Conference the international community agreed in principle to provide financial support to Afghanistan for the decade after transition in 2014. For their part, the Government of Afghanistan committed to continue to progress with vital economic and governance reform. In support of this, the UK is helping local government deliver better services for local people by assisting Provincial Governors' offices with management training, and by supporting the implementation of development projects identified by communities in previously insecure districts. The new DFID funded Afghanistan Business Innovation Fund opened in December, inviting proposals for business ideas that will create sustainable jobs.

Nationwide the security situation in Afghanistan is improving and 2011 marked the first time that year on year violence levels decreased since the ISAF mission was expanded in 2006. This nationwide view of Afghanistan, while positive and a good indication of overall progress, should not distract our attention from a varied regional picture.

In 2011 recorded violence levels fell significantly in Regional Command South West, the UK's area of operations. However, these gains have been tempered by a notable increase in security incidents in the east of the country and a smaller rise in violence levels in Regional Command South. The uneven regional picture reminds us that the insurgency remains resilient, but they are also under significant and sustained pressure in the areas where the Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF are focussing their efforts. In this context we have seen the insurgency increasingly deploy less conventional methods to execute their campaign: use of IEDs is up and they have focussed their efforts on a series of high-profile

assassinations and ‘spectacular’ attacks intended to undermine local perceptions of security. From a security perspective 2012 is likely to see further challenges as the insurgency attempts to regain its momentum. However, our resolve to get the job done remains resolute and we will continue to work alongside the Afghans to consolidate the gains of 2011.

Political

Bonn Conference

An International Conference on Afghanistan was held in Bonn on 5 December at which the Foreign Secretary represented the UK. It established a framework for the international community’s long-term engagement with Afghanistan beyond 2014. Lynne Featherstone, Ministerial Champion for Tackling Violence Against Women Overseas, attended the civil society events. Key outcomes from the Conference included: the international community’s commitment to providing long-term financial support to Afghanistan; agreement to produce a clear plan for future funding for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); and a clear set of guiding principles for the reconciliation process and its outcomes. The Afghan Government committed itself to reinvigorating progress on key reforms and development priorities, and to upholding all its international human rights obligations.

Regional

Pakistan Border Incident

On 26 November, 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed in an airstrike on two Pakistani military outposts in the Mohmand agency on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Foreign Minister Khar on 26 November, and the Prime Minister wrote to Prime Minister Gilani on 1 December, to express their deepest condolences for the Pakistani loss of life. We have been in close contact with the US and ISAF colleagues over the findings of the investigation into this tragic incident. A statement from the US Department of Defense expressed their deep regret for the loss of life and the lack of coordination that contributed to this event. The focus now needs to be on building trust in the region. In particular, we support efforts to establish procedures to minimise the likelihood of such a tragic event occurring again.

Strengthening the Afghan State

EU Foreign Affairs Council

The November EU Foreign Affairs Council agreed the negotiating mandate for a long-term partnership agreement between the EU, its member states and Afghanistan. This was welcomed at the December Bonn Conference. HMG strongly supports plans for this Co-operation Agreement on Partnership and Development, which sends a clear signal of the international community’s long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

Justice and Rule of Law

The PRT’s Rule of Law team helped Afghan partners to develop a coherent course structure at the Lashkar Gah Training Centre for the Afghan National Police (ANP). At present 11

percent of the instruction delivered at the training centre is carried out by Ministry of Interior instructors. The Governance and Rule of Law Sector Plan for 2012 has now been completed.

The PRT supported the Military Prosecutor in his investigations into Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) malpractice in Musa Qala. He is now ready to submit a case file to the Military Judge in Kandahar for trial.

The investigation into the escape of detainees under the care of the Counter Narcotics Police Afghanistan (CNPA) on 9 December, led to the Director of Helmand's CNPA and his Deputy being summoned to Kabul for investigation. They have been replaced by a new command team. The PRT is providing mentoring support to the new command team in order to minimise any potential disruption to counter-narcotics operations. As evidence that continued progress is possible despite this incident, the CNP have begun operating with the AUP on vehicle check points on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah. This is another example of an increasing willingness to integrate the various elements of the ANP.

Governance

The UK is helping Provincial Governors' Offices prepare for transition in 2014. So far, staff in 31 out of 34 provincial offices have received training to help them assess their requirements for the coming years. As a result, Herat and Panjshir provincial offices have identified a need to develop community planning, purchasing and local infrastructure capacity as priorities.

The Afghan Government's District Delivery Programme (DDP) which, with UK support, aims to establish a government presence and deliver basic services in seven key districts in Helmand, has started procurement for over 20 development projects. These projects, all identified as priorities by local communities, include undertaking repairs to schools and building new health clinics.

Following the November elections in Musa Qala and Marjah, the provincial administration conducted a security assessment in Sangin. They concluded that conditions had improved sufficiently to allow for district wide District Community Council elections in early 2012. Voter registration will commence in mid February.

Dr Ashraf Ghani, Chairman of National Transition Coordination Commission, visited Helmand on 30-31 December to launch Transition Stage Two in Helmand. His programme included visits to Nad-e Ali and Marjah, two of the three Stage Two transition districts. Significantly, and reflecting improved security conditions, his party travelled to both by road. They met with the Provincial government officials, the Provincial Council, Ulema and Peace Councils, and representatives of the ANSF.

Economic and Social Development

Contracts have been signed for three UK-funded district-level economic development plans in two provinces, in support of the Government of Afghanistan's Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility. The development plans have been approved by an Afghan Inter-Ministerial Committee covering agriculture, rural development, and counter-narcotics. They will expand the dairy and cotton industries in Balkh province, the poultry industry in

Nangarhar province and will help to promote economic growth and create alternative livelihoods to illegal poppy growth in rural communities.

The UK-funded Afghanistan Business Innovation Fund opened in December. It invites proposals for new ideas for business investment, with an emphasis on creating sustainable jobs. Detailed proposals will be selected for funding by April.

The British and United Arab Emirates Foreign Secretaries signed a joint agreement to extend a strategically important road between Sangin and Kajaki in Helmand province. This will help promote economic growth and improve links between the Government and local communities. The first phase of construction is planned for the first half of 2012.

Counter Narcotics

The annual UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Paris Pact Consultative Group, a key international forum for agreeing measures to tackle the Afghan opium trade, was held on 7-8 December in Vienna. The meeting ratified the recommendations of the three technical working groups held in 2011, agreed the activity for 2012, and identified a process to finalise preparations for the Third Paris Pact Ministerial Conference on 16 February. UNODC Executive Director Fedotov also launched the Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, which sets out UNODC's regional activity until 2014.

Security

Progress towards Transition

Implementation ceremonies for the transition of the second set of areas that would enter security transition (Tranche Two) began in December. They will be concluded by the start of February. Once implementation is complete, eight provinces will have fully entered the transition process. They are Kabul, Bamiyan, Panjshir, Balkh, Takhar, Daikundi, Samangan and Nimroz). Twelve more will have partly entered the process by transitioning selected cities and districts. Nad-e-Ali, which is within the UK's Area of Operations, entered transition on 31 December 2011 joining Lashkar Gah. Tranche Two will also see the Central Helmand districts of Marjeh and Nawa begin transition of lead security responsibility from ISAF (US) forces to ANSF.

ANSF Growth and Capability

December saw several important milestones in the capability and professional development of the ANSF. At Shindand Air Base in Herat province a ceremony marked the beginning of the first undergraduate pilot training held exclusively in Afghanistan in more than 30 years. Also in December the Afghan National Army (ANA) took charge, for the first time, of both the Counterinsurgency Leaders' course and the four week Team Leaders' course; it was the first time they have led these courses. As transition progresses across Afghanistan these are important markers in the ANA ultimately taking charge of all training and operations.

Table One: ANSF Growth to 31 December 2011

	Objective (30 November 2012)	Target Strength (31 December 2011)	Actual Strength (31 December 2011)	November Target Met
ANA:	195,000	174,766	179,610	Yes
ANP:	157,000	141,061	143,797	Yes
ANA Officers:	29,644	27,166	24,154	No
ANA NCOs:	72,123	60,826	50,070	No

Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	December Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	2.3%	No
ANP:	1.4%	1.4%	Yes
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.1%	Yes
Border Police	1.4%	2.2%	No
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	2.1%	No

Violence Levels

The winter weather continues to have a noticeable effect on insurgent activity. Extremely poor conditions and a significant drop in temperature this month have restricted insurgent freedom of movement and caused many fighters to return to their homes. Despite this seasonal lull, the insurgency senior leadership remains committed to conducting a violent campaign in Afghanistan. While it is unlikely that insurgent activity will increase significantly before the spring, it is probable that they will continue to plan high profile attacks to attempt to undermine confidence in the Afghan government and maintain their relevance through the winter. It is therefore important that Afghan and international security forces continue to fight the insurgency and disrupt their networks throughout the winter months in order to consolidate security gains made earlier in the year.

In December a series of attacks executed over the Shia religious holiday of Ashura left more than 80 dead. These attacks were tragic, but the ANSF response to these incidents was prompt, professional and independent.

Responsibility for the attacks was claimed by an individual claiming to lead Lashkar-e Jhangvi Al Alami, a Sunni militant group based in Pakistan. Sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni Muslims on this scale is unprecedented in recent Afghan history. There is no evidence to suggest that they form part of a wider sectarian campaign of violence within Afghanistan. The attacks were widely condemned by the Afghan government, the international community and the Taliban.

The most significant security incident in Helmand was an IED explosion which killed four people in Khan Neshin, including the District Governor (DG) who had made an unplanned stop when returning from a poppy eradication shura. The DG's vehicle detonated what was suspected to be a mine from previous conflicts. This was probably not a deliberate assassination attempt. In another incident, indicative of sustained insurgent intent, the Chairman of the Musa Qala District Community Council was caught in an ambush killing him and his son. His grandson later died of his injuries.

Type of incident	Definition	Change from November 2011	Comparison with December 2010
Security incidents	Enemy action and explosive hazards, both executed attacks and 'potential' attacks (e.g. an IED found and cleared)	↓ Fall in incidents	↓ Fall in incidents
Enemy initiated attacks	Attacks executed by insurgents (This does not include 'potential' attacks)	↓ Fall in attacks	↓ Fall in attacks
Complex attacks	Attacks conducted by multiple hostile elements employing at least two distinct classes of weapon	↓ Fall in attacks	↓ Fall in attacks

Table Three: International Contributions to ISAF

On 7 December, Bahrain became the 50th member of the ISAF coalition. Bahrain are providing a contingent of 95 personnel who are conducting force projection duties in Helmand province.

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	90,000	69%
UK	9,500	7.3%
Germany	4,818	3.7%
Italy	3,952	3.0%
France	3,916	3.0%
Poland	2,475	1.9%
Romania	1,876	1.4%
Turkey	1,845	1.4%
Australia	1,550	1.2%
Spain	1,488	1.2%
Others (38 nations)	8,966	6.9%
Current Total	130,386	100.00%
<i>Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 6 January 2012, actual numbers fluctuate daily.</i>		
<i>Source: ISAF</i>		

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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