



AFGHANISTAN

MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

November 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 twelfth report covers progress in November. 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

The second tranche of areas to enter the security transition process was announced on 27 November. This demonstrates continuing progress in the development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The announcement, which includes Nad-e-Ali in Helmand, means that Afghan Forces will soon begin to take lead responsibility for the security of approximately half the country's population. While the security situation throughout Afghanistan remains challenging, progress is being made. The ANSF are already demonstrating that they are able to lead on security effectively and competently in the areas that started the transition process earlier this year. They also demonstrated their growing capability at November's Traditional Loya Jirga where, despite insurgent intent, there were no security breaches.

The IMF Board has approved a new three-year programme of support for Afghanistan. This decision shows that the Afghan Government has reassured international donors and ordinary Afghans alike that they are serious about providing a safe economic and business environment. Now that a new IMF programme is in place, donors including the UK are able to resume support to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which helps the Afghan Government deliver vital basic services and key reforms for the Afghan people. In the meantime, with UK support, the Afghan Government continues to make good progress in raising its own funds: revenue collection reached record levels last quarter.

The International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn on 5 December agreed a framework for the international community's long-term engagement with Afghanistan to 2014 and beyond

and agreed to produce a clear plan for funding the ANSF in advance of the Chicago Conference to be held in May 2012.

At the Traditional Loya Jirga, President Karzai reiterated his commitment to stand down as President in 2014, in accordance with the Constitution.

Political

Bonn Conference

The International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn took place on 5 December. Hosted by the Germans and chaired by the Afghans, the Conference set out a framework for the international community's long-term engagement with Afghanistan beyond 2014. A full report on the Bonn Conference will be included in December's report.

Loya Jirga

The Afghans held a Traditional Loya Jirga (TLJ) on 16-19 November in Kabul. President Karzai secured widespread national support for a Strategic Partnership Declaration (SPD) with the US. President Karzai reiterated his commitment to stand down as President in 2014. The event also highlighted the continued progress being made in the political involvement of women in Afghanistan: approximately 20% of the 2,000 Afghan representatives invited to attend were women and at least one woman had participated on each of the 41 committees.

At the TLJ, participants also debated the reconciliation process. The TLJ's Resolution stated that reconciliation should continue. However it recommended a review of the budget and structure of the High Peace Council. This was an important signal from the Afghan people that they remain supportive of the reconciliation process despite Professor Rabbani's assassination. We will support President Karzai and his government as he takes forward this mandate.

Reintegration

The Head of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), Masoom Stanekzai, has now returned to work after recovering from injuries sustained in the attack on Rabbani. More than 2,700 individuals are now enrolled in the APRP nationwide.

In Helmand, the provincial government has begun to show greater support for the APRP. It also continues to be strongly engaged in "informal" reintegration. This aims to develop local peace agreements directly with tribal leaders and communities, leading to insurgents laying down their arms and returning home.

Regional

Pakistan Border Incident

On 26 November, 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed in an airstrike on two Pakistani military outposts on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Foreign Minister Khar on 26 November and again on the 2 December. The Prime Minister wrote to Prime Minister Gilani on 1 December, to express our deepest condolences for the Pakistani loss of life. We support the CENTCOM investigation into the incident, which is due to report

by late December, and have encouraged Pakistan to participate. We support Pakistan in playing a central role in the international effort to stabilise Afghanistan, which also contributes to the security of Pakistan. It was regrettable that Pakistan decided not to attend the Bonn Conference. Pakistan supported the regional process established at the Istanbul Conference and we hope it will re-engage on the follow up to the Bonn Conference.

Following the incident Pakistan closed its borders to ISAF traffic consignments entering and leaving Afghanistan through Pakistan by road. Although the likely duration of the Pakistan border closure is not clear, this is not currently a cause for concern. Border closures of this type are not unknown and we are relatively resilient to them. Planning is underway to identify alternative arrangements, including a greater use of the other ways in which we move freight, equipment and supplies to and from Afghanistan. This will mitigate the impact if the Pakistani border remain closed to ISAF traffic in the longer term

Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan

The Istanbul conference on 2 November saw regional leaders go further than before in their commitment to work together for a stable and secure Afghanistan in a stable and secure region. Significantly, regional leaders, supported by international partners, signed up to an “Istanbul Process”. This will ensure for the first time a framework for taking forward political and security co-operation going beyond economic cooperation. They also made commitments to support the Afghan government in its efforts to promote reconciliation and to tackle terrorism together across the region. The test will now be in the implementation, though the fact that the region could reach agreement on these sensitive issues is important. We will continue to encourage and engage with the process.

International Contact Group (ICG), Astana

On 15 November, the German Senior Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) Michael Steiner, Afghan Foreign Minister Zalmai Rassoul and Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov hosted the 12th meeting of the International Contact Group in Astana. The meeting focussed on preparations for the Bonn Conference. The Afghan Government gave delegates an update on the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) and reassurance that the work of the High Peace Council would continue despite the assassination of its former chairman, Professor Rabbani.

Strengthening the Afghan State

Justice and Rule of Law

The arrival of 12 newly qualified judges in Helmand for employment in the Districts has been one of the more significant Afghan successes this month. Additionally four Prosecutors who arrived in Helmand between August and October have now been sent out to their respective districts. Together this demonstrates that there is Afghan confidence in the stability of the security situation in Helmand including, to a degree, in the Northern Districts. The Central Helmand River Valley (CHRV) districts now boast a full panel of three judges each and are meeting the Helmand plan expectations in the other areas.

The first Female Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) started her NCO course this month paving the way for others. The number of male NCOs going through training has increased significantly.

Governance

The independent anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) completed its third mission in Afghanistan during November. The committee will now develop recommendations and benchmarks on how to tackle corruption in Afghanistan. This will be discussed and agreed with the Government of Afghanistan as well as the international community.

UK support to help the Ministry of the Interior to manage police services better is progressing well. Training continued with the first of a series of workshops to help senior officials improve the management of the ministry through better work planning and stronger administration.

Helmand has seen two elections since the last Parliamentary report. These have expanded the size and reach of District Councils in Musa Qala and Marjah by over 50 per cent. Notably, security at both elections was provided solely and successfully by Afghan forces. Both took place without malicious incident. These expansions substantially widen the Government's ability to represent, protect and deliver basic services to the population, while reinforcing its legitimacy and providing a non-violent forum for competition between powerbrokers.

Economic and Social Development

A World Bank report published in November shows that Afghanistan's future fiscal position looks uncertain as we progress through transition. Although Afghanistan's domestic revenue is expected to continue to increase, its operating expenditure will grow faster. According to the report, which provided a focus for discussions at the Bonn Conference on 5 December, Afghanistan's financing gap is projected to peak in 2014/15, at around 40% of GDP. By 2021/22, the projected financing gap will be around 25% of GDP. This is one of the greatest risks facing Afghanistan. The UK is working hard to secure long-term commitments from the international community to continue to support Afghanistan beyond 2014 to fill this gap.

The IMF Board approved a new three-year Extended Credit Facility to the Government of Afghanistan on 14 November. This is good news for Afghanistan, as it signals renewed confidence by the IMF in the Government's potential to manage the economy well and to progress its development plans. The signing of the new programme also means that international donors including the UK are able to resume funding to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which helps the Government pay for vital basic services for the Afghan people.

Recent reporting has shown that revenue collections continued to grow over the second quarter of the Afghan financial year. Total revenue collections for the Afghanistan Revenue Department, which is supported by a DFID-funded project, increased from £262 million to £322 million, an increase of 23% over the same period last year.

UK-funded demining teams in Herat cleared more than 14.8 hectares of minefield and 36.9 hectares of battlefield in November. During clearance, the HALO Trust teams found and destroyed two anti-tank mines, 1,155 items of ammunition and over 2,350 bullets. The cleared land is now used by Afghan residents for growing crops and other activities.

DFID's support to the World Food Programme has paid for nearly 5,000 metric tonnes of high energy biscuits, which have been distributed to 1.4 million schoolchildren in 25 provinces of Afghanistan since May. This support has also resulted in improving school attendance, particularly for girls.

In November, more than 1,300 students were enrolled on DFID-funded technical vocational training courses in Lashkar Gah. A new training centre in Gereshk has opened to cater for an additional 800 students, including 320 women. Courses on offer include tailoring, carpentry, metal work, plumbing, electrician skills and metal pressing. Students at centres in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk will graduate at the end of December.

As part of the UK's ongoing programme of road-building and reconstruction in central Helmand, 33 kilometres of newly rehabilitated district roads in Babaji and Marjah were handed over to the Government of Afghanistan. These roads are helping to improve freedom of movement and access to markets and public services for ordinary Afghans.

A team of Royal Engineers supervised work by Afghan contractors to rehabilitate four sites on the Helmand canal and irrigation network. This vital rehabilitation work has helped improve canal flow to farmers in Helmand, where agriculture is a primary source of income and employment. The Royal Engineers also undertook reconnaissance missions to a further 31 sites for building work that will be undertaken from January 2012.

Counter Narcotics

The UK funded a conference in Kabul, hosted by the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics. Eighteen provincial governors were briefed on the 2012 eradication campaign. Governors of the most prolific poppy cultivating provinces were presented with targeting maps produced by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics' UK-mentored Survey and Monitoring Team. These focus eradication operations in areas where farmers have genuine alternatives to poppy cultivation, taking into account access to markets, transport links, development programmes and improved infrastructure. Conducting eradication where there are alternative livelihood opportunities not only promotes sustainable transition away from poppy cultivation but also minimises unintended negative effects of crop eradication. The conference was well received by attendees and the media and formed a key part of the planning process for next year's eradication programme.

Security

Progress towards Transition

On 27 November, the Government of Afghanistan released the second set of areas ("Tranche Two") that would enter security transition. Following a short planning phase, implementation is scheduled to begin by the end of this year. Once it does, eight provinces will have fully entered transition (Kabul, Bamiyan, Panjshir, Balkh, Takhar, Daikundi, Samangan and Nimroz). Twelve more will have partly entered the process through selected cities and districts. In Helmand the districts included are Nawa, Nad-e-Ali and Marjah. Lashkar Gah featured in Tranche One. Lashkar Gah and Nad-e-Ali are within the UK's Area of Operation.

By early 2012, about 50% of the Afghan population will be in areas under transition and seeing its daily benefits. Transition in Tranche One has progressed well, with Afghan National Security Force capability continuing to improve. The process remains on track for the Afghan National Security Forces to lead on security across the country by the end of 2014.

ANSF Growth and Capability

The Traditional Loya Jirga represented an ideal insurgent target and consequently placed unprecedented demands on various components on the ANSF who planned and led the security arrangements. Despite public statements of intent to disrupt the event and a number of related insurgent attacks none were successful. The complex security effort was a success and demonstrated the ANSF's ability to conduct a robust and professional operation.

Table One: ANSF Growth to 30 November 2011

	Objective (30 November 2012)	Target Strength (30 November 2011)	Actual Strength (30 November 2011)	November Target Met
ANA:	195,000	173,183	176,354	Yes
ANP:	157,000	141,610	140,596	No
ANA Officers:	29,644	26,904	23,484	No
ANA NCOs:	72,123	60,163	49,074	No

Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	November Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	2.6%	No
ANP:	1.4%	1.3%	Yes
Uniformed Police	1.4%	0.9%	Yes
Border Police	1.4%	2.0%	No
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	3.4%	No

Violence Levels

Violence levels in Afghanistan have reduced this month in accordance with seasonal expectations. Despite guidance from the Taliban senior leadership to conduct more attacks, there was a notable decrease in security incidents during the Eid-al-Adha celebrations. Insurgent activity did not exceed anticipated levels in the immediate aftermath of the festival. Regional variations in violence levels remain evident with more than 90% of attacks conducted in the east, south and southwest of the country. These statistics should not cloud the significant progress that continues to be made in Regional Command Southwest (the UK's Area of Operations) where violence levels are noticeably lower than in 2010. The east

(the largest and most populated region in Afghanistan) remains the most contested area in the country and insurgent activity has increased here during 2011.

Following the insurgents' failure to disrupt the Loya Jirga, it is likely that their leadership will continue in their attempt to execute high-profile attacks in order to perpetuate perceptions of insecurity and to undermine the credibility of the Afghan Government, the ANSF and the ISAF campaign. The ISAF coalition remains committed to tackling this threat and will continue operations against the insurgents over the winter.

UK Fatalities

This month has seen a total of seven British military fatalities, the largest in one calendar month since February 2011. While there is no evidence to attribute it to new insurgent tactics or capabilities, this loss of life is tragic. It is important that these deaths are viewed in the operational context in which our forces are currently serving. Helmand province remains a challenging area and we will continue to work with the ANSF to stabilise the insurgent threat. However, the predominant trend is one of increasing security and violence levels in the province have reduced by nearly half over the summer and autumn compared to the corresponding time period last year. In recognising the sacrifice of these Servicemen, it is important to reflect on their work and the work of all other deployed personnel which is having a real and positive effect on the lives of Afghans.

Type of incident	Definition	Change from October 2011	Comparison with November 2010
Security incidents	Enemy action and explosive hazards, both executed attacks and 'potential' attacks (e.g. an IED found and cleared)	↔ No significant change	↓ Fall in incidents
Enemy initiated attacks	Attacks executed by insurgents (This does not include 'potential' attacks)	↔ No significant change	↓ Fall in attacks
Complex attacks	Attacks conducted by multiple hostile elements employing at least two distinct classes of weapon	↔ No significant change	↓ Fall in attacks

Troop contributions

Table Three: International Contributions to ISAF

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	90,000	68.9%
UK	9,500	7.3%
Germany	5,000	3.8%
France	3,932	3.0%
Italy	3,918	3.0%
Poland	2,580	2.0%
Romania	1,873	1.4%

Turkey	1,840	1.4%
Australia	1,550	1.2%
Spain	1,526	1.2%
Others (37 nations) ¹	8,919	6.8%
Current Total	130,638	100.00%
<i>Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 18 October 2011, actual numbers fluctuate daily.</i>		
<i>Source: ISAF</i>		

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
December 2011**

¹ Bahrain became the 50th ISAF member on 7 December 2011 and therefore their contribution is not included in this month's report.