

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
June 2013

The UK is 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 twenty ninth report covers progress in June 2013. 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 Prime Minister visited Afghanistan on 29 June accompanied by Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Baroness Warsi. In Helmand, they celebrated Armed Forces' Day with troops, witnessing the progress and changing role of British Forces as they move from a combat role to one based primarily on training, advising and assisting the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). In Kabul the Prime Minister and Baroness Warsi met President Karzai. The Prime Minister and President Karzai agreed on the importance of credible Presidential and Provincial elections, and the peaceful transfer of power to President Karzai's successor, for the future stability of Afghanistan. They also discussed the peace process and Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan.

On 18 June, the Qatari Government announced that the Taliban would open a political office in Doha for the purpose of talks with the US and Afghans.

On 14 June, President Karzai appointed a new Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. Following the appointments, the Chair of the Commission expressed her concern that some of the new appointees might not have the necessary expertise. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, expressed similar concerns, urging the Afghan Government to reconsider the recent appointments and re-open the selection process.

The UK has agreed a new programme in Afghanistan to strengthen Afghan women's political participation, as candidates and as voters, in the upcoming elections. DFID has committed £4.5 million for the programme from June 2013 to December 2015.

On 18 June, President Karzai announced that the last of the 91 Afghan Districts, covering 11 Provinces and the remaining 13 per cent of the Afghan population, will enter security transition. This fifth and final tranche of security transition means that the ANSF will assume lead security responsibility throughout the country, for all of Afghanistan's 27 million citizens.

On 4 June, a Written Ministerial Statement was laid in the House of Commons outlining the UK redundancy policy for Locally Employed Staff in Afghanistan. This confirmed a package of training and financial support for our locally employed staff in Afghanistan, in recognition that as our presence in Afghanistan reduces our requirement for the support of local staff is also reducing.

Strengthening the Afghan State

Political

The Prime Minister, accompanied by Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Baroness Warsi, visited Afghanistan on 29 June. They celebrated Armed Forces' Day with troops in Helmand, witnessing the progress and changing role of British Forces as they move from a combat role to one primarily of training, advising and assisting the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). During this visit, the Prime Minister announced that money from banking fines will be used to help build a permanent memorial for those who have lost their lives in Afghanistan at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. The Prime Minister and Baroness Warsi met Provincial Governor Naeem and visited the Provincial Reconstruction Team. In Kabul the Prime Minister met President Karzai. The Prime Minister and President Karzai agreed on the importance of credible Presidential and Provincial elections, and the peaceful transfer of power to President Karzai's successor, for the future stability of Afghanistan. They also discussed the peace process and Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan.

On 18 June, the Qatari Government announced that the Taliban would open a political office in Doha for the purpose of talks with the US and Afghans. The Taliban read out a statement indicating the office was for peaceful political purposes and they would not let Afghanistan be used as a base from which to threaten other countries. The way in which the office was presented, including displaying a banner reading 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan', was contrary to agreed terms. On 19 June, the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the correct title of the office was 'Political Office of the Afghan Taliban'.

The UK continues to support an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process and has long called for the opening of an office in Doha to facilitate talks. It is difficult, but right, to engage the Taliban in a peace process, to try to persuade them to give up an armed struggle and take up a political one. Peace processes are long, complex and bumpy. This will be no exception. But we have been working with our international partners in support of an

Afghan-led peace process for some time and will continue to do so. We would like to see early meetings between the Taliban and the US and the Taliban and Afghans, on the basis of agreed terms.

On the 23 June, the Upper House of the Afghan Parliament passed the Independent Election Commission (IEC) Structure & Duties Law, amending the draft of the law that the Lower House had previously passed. This was the second time the law had passed through Parliament, having been returned by President Karzai. A Joint Commission of both Houses will now be formed to reconcile the drafts and send the law on to the President for signature. Additionally, on 1 July, following extensive debate over the previous days, the Electoral Law was passed by the Meshrano Jirga. As with the IEC Law, the Upper House amended the draft and a further Joint Commission will be formed to resolve the differences between the drafts. It remains unclear whether both laws will have been promulgated before the start of the Afghan National Assembly's summer recess (due to start 23 July), which will be important if the laws are to be implemented in advance of next year's presidential and provincial council elections.

The process of voter registration at provincial level has continued according to the IEC's plans to include new voters, those who have returned to Afghanistan since previous registration rounds, and those who have lost or damaged existing voter cards. As of 30 June, 75,926 people had registered including 16,258 women.

On 19 June, the IEC held the second meeting of the Gender and Elections Coordination Group, which should become a platform for the discussion of gender-specific issues ahead of the elections. The meeting focussed on encouraging women's involvement in the voter registration process.

Governor Mohammed Alem Sahee of Jowzjan Province resigned following an attack by political opponents on his home in Sherberghan, having fled to Kabul for his own safety. Governor Daud Shah Saba of Herat Province also resigned, claiming he was prevented from doing his job by external interference.

On 14 June, President Karzai appointed a new Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. Following the appointments, Dr. Sima Samar, Chair of the Commission, expressed her concern that some of the new appointees might not have the necessary expertise. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, expressed similar concerns in a press release on 28 June, and urged the Afghan Government to reconsider the recent appointments and re-open the selection process.

Multilateral engagement

On 20 June, the UN Security Council debated the situation in Afghanistan. UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, Jan Kubis, briefed the Council on developments across the country, covering political and security progress. The UK, represented by Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant, highlighted the important progress made on the transition of security to Afghans, preparations for elections in 2014 and developments in the peace process. In

addition to outlining the challenges ahead, the UK reiterated its long-term support to building an inclusive and prosperous Afghanistan.

On 24 June, the EU Foreign Affairs Council discussed the situation in Afghanistan. NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, shared his views on post 2014 Afghanistan. The UK, represented by Minister Lidington, underlined the importance of the EU continuing to send a strong signal of support to Afghanistan beyond 2014. The Council agreed that in coordination with other international players such as NATO and the UN, the EU should agree a comprehensive strategy for its engagement with the Government of Afghanistan post-2014.

Rule of Law

NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan announced that it will be withdrawing its presence from the Lashkar Gah Police Training Centre three months early, in December 2013, on account of the good progress made enabling the ANSF to assume the management and day-to-day running of the Centre.

On 17 June, Helmand Provincial Chief of Police, General Mohammad Nabi Elham, suffered minor injuries in a suicide car bomb attack on a police convoy in Lashkar Gah. The attacker died whilst three other police officers in the convoy suffered minor injuries.

Helmand's first female prosecutor since 1996 started work at the Provincial Prosecutor's Office in Lashkar Gah, having qualified by working as a prosecutor administrator for two years.

Governance

The UK has agreed a new programme in Afghanistan to strengthen Afghan women's political participation, as candidates and as voters, in the upcoming elections. DFID has committed £4.5 million for the programme from June 2013 to December 2015. The aims of the programme are to build the political capacity of female Afghan candidates through training and mentoring, and facilitate formal and informal discussions to help broaden support for female Afghan political candidates. This should help to strengthen the role of women in the 2014 presidential and provincial council and 2015 parliamentary elections.

Economic Development

UK support in Helmand for the development of better governance, local justice, public services and the building of sustainable livelihoods continues. Progress is being made on the UK/UAE joint funded upgrade of Route 611 – the road linking the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah to Kajaki in Northern Helmand. Fifty per cent of the road has now been constructed. Route 611 will allow local Afghans to access markets, schools and clinics as well as bringing security to some of the most isolated communities in the province.

Helmand's Department for Public Works has put UK delivered training into practice through its maintenance of a seriously damaged section of Highway 601. The ability of the Afghan

Line Ministries to independently maintain their infrastructure and deliver the Government's agenda is crucial to ensure a viable state, which DFID is seeking to deliver through programmes including Strengthening Provincial Administration and Delivery (SPAD) and the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).

Security

In line with seasonal norms, June has been the most violent month to date in 2013 despite nationwide violence levels remaining broadly consistent with the same period in 2012. The number of high profile attacks in the capital has increased with 12 taking place so far this year. This compares to 10 in the whole of 2012 and 16 in 2011. Whilst these attacks often prove militarily ineffective, they have a significant international media profile. The primary purpose of such attacks is twofold; to undermine confidence in and among the Afghan security forces, and spread discord and fear amongst the local population.

On 10 June, insurgents launched rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire into Kabul International Airport. The attack lasted six hours resulting in seven insurgents killed and no ANSF casualties. On 11 June, insurgents launched a suicide vehicle borne IED attack on the Supreme Court in Kabul. Court employees and their children were caught in the blast which resulted in a large number of people killed and injured. This was the deadliest attack in Kabul since December 2011 and illustrates the insurgency's willingness to engage in indiscriminate violence. Both incidents were dealt with entirely by the ANSF without any support from ISAF, demonstrating their capacity to respond quickly and effectively to security incidents.

On 25 June, insurgents launched a high profile and complex attack on the Ariana Hotel within the 'Green Zone' Security cordon in Kabul. The attack resulted in the death of six ANSF and all eight insurgents who carried out the attack. This incident was again capably dealt with by the ANSF but the complex and sophisticated nature of the attack highlights the significant challenges that the ANSF will continue to face in the coming months.

Milestone 13

On 18 June, President Karzai announced that the last 91 Afghan Districts, covering 11 Provinces and remaining 13 per cent of the Afghan population, will enter security transition. This fifth and final tranche of security transition means that the ANSF will assume lead security responsibility throughout the country, for all of Afghanistan's 27 million citizens. To mark this significant milestone in Afghanistan's history, a ceremony took place at the Afghan National Defence University attended by President Karzai, the NATO Secretary General and the Commander.

ANSF

Significant progress has continued to be made in security transition across the country. Assuming the mantle for lead security responsibility from ISAF, the ANA now routinely conducts around 15 named operations and 1,000 patrols per day across Afghanistan, many of which are combined with the Afghan police (ANP). In central Helmand throughout June,

the ANP conducted all of their patrols (approximately 1,000 per week) without ISAF support. Across Helmand ISAF troops represented just seven per cent of the total forces deployed on recent operations. In light of such progress, it is expected that UK troops will lift their routine mentoring from Battalion to Brigade level towards the end of the summer.

However, progress is slow in some areas due to a combination of developing but nascent Afghan capabilities and a determined and resilient enemy. Limitations in the ANSF's ability to develop critical enablers and absorb new equipment or training, such as emergency medical care, logistics supply and the Air Force means that the ANSF continues to rely on ISAF in certain key capability areas.

Overall, ANSF performance in the early stages of this fighting season is encouraging. Insurgent attacks are invariably contained and the ANSF is capable of deterring insurgent activity where the ANSF mass in numbers. However, in more isolated areas, ground frequently changes hands as small bases and checkpoints often fall before being retaken. Where the insurgency has succeeded in launching major attacks in Kabul, the ANSF has responded effectively with the attacks resulting in a shorter duration and causing less of a physical impact than previously. However, this has yet to be replicated outside of the capital and major population centres, where a lack of Combat Air Support and other critical battlefield enablers often results in prolonged skirmishes.

How these events ultimately impact on confidence in and of the ANSF remains to be seen.

NATO Defence Ministerial

The Secretary of State for Defence attended the NATO Defence Ministers' Meeting on 4 and 5 June. He and other Defence Ministers endorsed the Concept of Operation for the post-2014 NATO led mission; Resolute Support. It will be a regional mission, with the US confirming that it will take the lead in the South and East, Germany in the North, Italy in the West and Turkey indicating that it may lead in the capital region. The Resolute Support mission will focus on training, advising and assisting the ANSF.

Defence Secretary Visit

The Secretary of State for Defence visited Afghanistan on 13 and 14 June. On 13 June, he held a number of meetings with senior Afghans in Kabul and discussed the peace process with President Karzai. On meeting the Minister of Defence, Bismillah Mohammadi, he discussed the progress of the ANSF, institutional development, and progress on the Afghan National Army Officer Academy. The Defence Secretary also visited the future site of the Academy at Qargha, west of Kabul, and confirmed plans to start training Afghan cadets from autumn 2013. On 14 June, he visited British troops and received a detailed briefing on the progress of redeployment, visited a forward operating base, and met staff at the Provincial Reconstruction Team. He met the commander of the Afghan Brigade in Central Helmand, Brigadier Sherin Shah, to discuss the progress of security transition.

Locally Employed Staff

On 4 June, a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) was laid in the House of Commons outlining the UK redundancy policy for Locally Employed Staff in Afghanistan. This confirmed a package of training and financial support for our locally employed staff in Afghanistan, in recognition that as our presence in Afghanistan reduces our requirement for the support of local staff is also reducing. The Government wants to encourage local staff to stay in Afghanistan and to use their skills and knowledge to make it stronger, better able to meet the challenges ahead and to seize the opportunities. For this reason, we have decided to implement a generous package of training and financial support for our locally engaged staff in Afghanistan. HMG acknowledges that some local staff, such as interpreters, have worked in particularly dangerous and challenging roles in Helmand. In recognition of this unique and exceptional service to the United Kingdom, these local staff and their immediate families will be offered a third option – resettlement in the UK. In line with previous similar policies, qualification for this redundancy scheme is limited to those local staff who were in post working directly for HMG on 19 December 2012, when the Prime Minister announced the drawdown of UK forces, and who have served more than 12 months when they are made redundant.

The aim is that those who meet the eligibility criteria will be informed of that fact, and will be invited to make an application in order to select which of the options available to them under the scheme they wish to take up.

The review of the Government's intimidation policy for local staff in Afghanistan announced in the WMS has been completed in consultation with local staff. The intimidation policy ensures a fair and robust system of assessing threats to, and ensuring the protection of, our local staff.

Detentions

On 5 June, the Secretary of State for Defence gave notice of his intention to transfer UK-captured detainees into Afghan custody for investigation and possible prosecution at the Afghan National Detention Facility in Parwan. His decision was challenged by human rights lawyers as part of the broader legal challenge to our detention policy brought through the recent Habeas Corpus applications. As such, the court placed an injunction preventing the transfer of detainees into Afghan custody until further order by the court. At a subsequent hearing the High Court agreed to vary the injunction; terms were agreed that have allowed the transfer into Afghan custody of those detainees who have consented to these terms. Transfers to the Afghan National Detention Facility in Parwan.

ISAF Statistics

ISAF no longer publishes figures on Enemy Initiated Attacks (EIA) as these statistics are becoming increasingly difficult to verify with Afghan security forces taking over from ISAF in collecting the data. Consequently, data on EIAs will no longer feature in Monthly Progress Reports.

Due to the requirement of publishing the June Monthly Progress Report in Parliament before Summer recess, it is not possible to include the ANSF force level and attrition statistics for this month. In addition, the July and August reports will be combined and laid in Parliament in September.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
July 2013