

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
September 2011

The UK is engaged in Afghanistan as part of a 49-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 tenth report covers progress in September. 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

Former President Rabbani's death at the hands of a suicide bomber on 20 September has drawn world-wide condemnation. It is too early to draw definitive conclusions on the long-term effect his death will have on the peace process, but it may prove significant. Much will depend on his successor as Chair of the High Peace Council and the continuing efforts of the Afghan Government to achieve national unity and a political solution to Afghanistan's problems.

On 13 September, as part of their campaign to undermine the peace process, insurgents attacked the US Embassy, ISAF Headquarters and an Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) base in Kabul. The attacks were not successful and neither the US Embassy nor ISAF HQ perimeters were breached. Eleven civilians were tragically killed in the attacks. However the ANSF led an effective response: they successfully neutralised the threat and demonstrated a high degree of operational competence.

With UK support, the Government of Afghanistan continues to improve their delivery of basic services. The new National Priority Programme for Local Governance will help local government institutions deliver improved basic services to communities, while a UK-funded Afghan Government programme is bringing opportunities for licit livelihoods to more people. Both will help to reinforce successful security transition. The IMF and the Government of Afghanistan continue to work towards agreeing a new programme of support, and we are hopeful agreement will be reached this Autumn, allowing the UK and the international community to resume routine funding to the Afghan Government.

The insurgency is resilient and, as demonstrated by the recent high-profile attacks in Kabul, remains a threat. However, such incidents rarely achieve their tactical effect and are designed to create a perception of increased violence and instability that it is not reflective of the progress being made in much of the country. We should not allow these attacks to distort the many examples of significant security improvements or overshadow continued progress to governance and development objectives. There remain many challenges ahead but there is also much encouraging progress.

Political

The Chairman of the High Peace Council, former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated on 20 September. A suicide bomber who claimed to be a member of the insurgency interested in reconciliation carried out the attack. The Afghan Government is investigating the murder. Following the assassination, President Karzai announced that his Government would review the methodology of its approach on reconciliation. The UK remains committed to working with him and the Afghan Government to achieve an inclusive and sustainable political settlement.

Reconciliation and Reintegration

September saw a heightened ISAF push to increase the effectiveness of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) in southern Afghanistan. Ministers Rabbani and Stanekzai hosted a Southern Reintegration Shura in Kandahar on 12-13 September. At the Shura they provided central government direction and support for provincial reintegration efforts. Despite Former President Rabbani's assassination, Minister Stanekzai's anticipated retirement and resulting speculation over the future of national reconciliation efforts, local Afghan Government work to improve APRP structures continues.

The Helmand PRT, Regional Command (South West), ISAF Joint Command (IJC) and the British Embassy in Kabul increased its engagement with Northern Helmand power brokers and tribal elders in support of ongoing Provincial Government efforts to explore local reconciliation deals. Helmand Governor Mangal continued his efforts to extend the reach of the Afghan Government through brokering agreements with communities in the remaining insurgency strongholds in the Upper Gereshk Valley and Kajaki.

Regional Developments

The UK continued to work with the Afghan Government and international partners to prepare for the regional Istanbul Conference on 2 November and for the Bonn Conference on 5 December. A working group of the Joint Afghanistan/Pakistan Peace Commission met in Islamabad on 16 September.

Parliament

Following the Independent Election Commission's (IEC) decision to replace nine sitting MPs, the new Members were sworn into Parliament on 3 September. These changes have been accepted by one coalition of MPs, whose members are now attending Parliament when the Lower House is sitting. In contrast, an alternative coalition has rejected the changes on

legal grounds and is boycotting sessions of the Lower House. Alongside our international partners, we continue to encourage parliamentarians to work together to bring this issue to a resolution so that Parliament can move forward and focus on its legislative agenda.

Strengthening the Afghan State

Justice and Rule of Law

The UK is working with key officials of the Ministry of Interior to improve their understanding of how they can manage police services in a democratic and accountable manner. During September the Ministry of Interior's Chief of Staff, General Burhani Rahimullah, travelled to the UK where he learned how the UK develops police policy, improves the laws governing the police and holds the police to account. The trip included a visit to the West Midlands police service where he saw how a local UK police service operates and works with the Home Office.

Seven female Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) officers at Gereshk Police HQ successfully completed training provided by the Ministry of Defence. At the Regional Training College (SW) there are currently 281 basic patrolmen, 126 NCOs and eight Team Medics in training. A train the trainer course was delivered to four AUP trainers. This brings the total number students having completed this course to 23 out of a current Tashkiel (establishment) of 25.

The European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan continued its work building capacity within the Afghan National Police, completing a five day crime scene and corruption investigation course. They also handed over essential investigative equipment which was provided by the British Embassy in Kabul (BEK). The course was attended by 25 investigators and prosecutors from Gardez. More than 1000 students have attended courses at the EUPOL-led Staff College in Kabul since it began work in November 2010. These courses are aimed at senior leadership within the ANP. Over 30 courses are now being run.

Governance

In September the Afghan Government produced its draft National Priority Programme for Local Governance. This will improve the delivery of key basic services such as health and education to the Afghan people. Local institutions currently overlap, are not well funded and are not always able to deliver services that meet citizens' expectations. The National Programme will clarify the role of local government bodies and set out how provinces could be funded in a more equitable and transparent manner.

Despite the attack on the British Council (BC) on 19 August, the BC team continued their preparations to implement the UK and Nordic civil society trust. Through this programme civil society organisations from across Afghanistan will receive grants to work with the Government to help it become more accountable and responsive to its citizens, particularly women.

In Helmand, the PRT has continued to support the provincial administration in extending representative bodies at district level and in improving delivery of government services through the District Delivery Programme (DDP). Seven districts of Helmand now have District Community Councils and all seven have developed and agreed a District Delivery

Plan to be funded and implemented by the provincial administration and Kabul. To date five of the districts in central Helmand are accessing funds for improved service delivery under the District Delivery Programme

Economic and Social Development

An IMF mission took place in September, culminating in IMF staff putting forward a new three-year programme of support to their management team. This will still require the Government of Afghanistan to complete the remaining prior actions. If the Government of Afghanistan continues to make progress on the recapitalisation of the Central Bank of Afghanistan and asset recovery, we are hopeful that the IMF Board will agree the new programme this autumn.

The Afghan Government submitted an innovative funding application to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support equitable access to education, targeting insecure areas and with a specific focus on girls. The process of developing the application helped to forge important relationships, bringing together the UN, World Bank, donors and civil society under very strong leadership of the Ministry of Education. While most countries take one to two years to develop a programme for funding, Afghanistan has managed this in six months.

The UK-supported Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility extended its activities to Parwan, the programme's fourth province. The newly-hired Parwan Province team selected two Districts to form the basis for Enterprise Development Programmes. These programmes will promote licit agricultural livelihoods and strengthen agricultural markets, thereby helping to reduce poppy cultivation.

The Head of the UK-led PRT in Helmand province attended a ceremony to congratulate 960 young men from across Helmand on completing three months of vocational training. This was funded by UK aid. The students received a \$150 graduation kit to help them to find work. Around 35% of graduating students have already found employment or apprenticeships. The UK will support 15,000 Helmandis through technical and vocational education and training by 2015, with further training centres opening in five other Helmand Districts by early 2012.

Counter Narcotics

On 26 September, a combined Afghan and coalition security force seized over 100 kg of heroin, 80 kg of opium and 12,000 kg of chemicals used to process drugs in an operation in Baghran district, Helmand province. Three drug laboratories were also destroyed. This was one of the largest drug seizures ever made by joint forces in Afghanistan and has damaged a significant source of funding for the insurgency.

The Ministry for Counter Narcotics hosted the second regional Counter Narcotics Conference in Kabul on 5-6 September. This involved the counter narcotics agencies of Tajikistan, Russia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The UK-funded conference discussed ways to enhance co-operation across the region in tackling the drugs trade and agreed on a number of joint measures to take this forward.

For the last four years, the Helmand Food Zone wheat seed distribution scheme has distributed genetically superior wheat and vegetable seed to Helmand’s farmers. This is part of Governor Mangal’s Counter Narcotic strategy and helps farmers to break away from growing poppy by providing an accessible alternative. In September and October the UK Conflict Pool, Danish Development Agency and USAID funded project will reach 42,020 farmers in 11 Districts of Helmand by delivering over 9,000 tonnes to some of the most remote and hostile areas of the province. The programme uses local contractors with very little ISAF assistance. This demonstrates the improvement in freedom of movement during the last year. This is the widest distribution to date and is 48% complete as of 8 October, giving farmers subsidised inputs for licit crops to plant in November instead of poppy.

Security

Violence Levels

Levels of violence vary considerably from region to region. Significant and tangible progress has been made in Regional Command (SW) – the UK’s area of operations – and improvements have started to emerge in the south over the summer months. However, these successes must be acknowledged against a challenging situation in the East where ANSF and ISAF troops continue to face an increasing number of attacks. This reminds us that there is still work to be done.

Insurgent Threat

Type of incident	Definition	Change from August 2011	Comparison with Sept 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

The insurgency leadership remains committed to conducting a violent campaign in Afghanistan. However, the trends shown above indicate that they are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a high operational tempo at a time when fighting and levels of violence are traditionally at their peak. Recent events suggest that insurgent leaders are focusing their operations on more high profile attacks. This is an attempt to distort evidence of campaign progress and affect perceptions of security among the Afghan population and the international community.

In central Helmand province – the UK’s area of operations – there has been a substantial drop in the number of attacks compared to the same period last year. While we can draw encouragement from these trends, we cannot afford to be complacent. It is too early to draw definitive conclusions and we should continue to expect challenges ahead.

In September, the most notable high profile incidents were the Kabul attacks on 13-14 September and the assassination of former President and Chair of the High Peace Council, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani. There has been uncertainty over who was responsible for Rabbani's murder. The Haqqani network denied involvement and the Taliban's initial claim of responsibility was subsequently rescinded.

On 13-14 September, small groups of insurgents launched a coordinated attack on the US Embassy, ISAF Headquarters and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) targets in Kabul. On a tactical level the attacks were not successful, and although well planned, they did not display an improved level of insurgent capability. Afghan security forces successfully completed an exceptionally difficult night-time building clearance and for the first time Afghan Air Force helicopters were deployed in direct support of troops on the ground. Ultimately, the overall lack of damage and relatively low number of casualties in the face of a carefully thought out attack are encouraging and demonstrate real progress in the ANSF's capability.

Senior Haqqani facilitator Haji Mali Khan was captured by Coalition and Afghan forces at the end of September. As a senior commander within the Haqqani network, his removal from the battlefield will deal a major blow to one of the most dangerous terrorist networks operating in Afghanistan.

Afghan security agencies, supported by ISAF, have and will continue to disrupt planned attacks. A national reduction in violence and tangible improvements in ANSF capabilities provide good indications of progress, but this is fragile and not yet irreversible. Consequently, ISAF and ANSF forces will continue a high tempo of operations, thereby maintaining pressure on the insurgency with the aim of minimising the threat they pose to long-term and sustained stability.

Troop contributions

Table One: International Contributions to ISAF

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	90,000	68.9%
UK	9,500	7.3%
Germany	5,000	3.8%
Italy	3,918	3.0%
France	3,935	3.0%
Poland	2,580	2.0%
Romania	1,948	1.5%
Turkey	1,840	1.4%
Australia	1,550	1.2%
Spain	1,523	1.2%
Others (37 nations)	8,876	6.8%
Current Total	130,670	100.00%
<i>Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 9 September 2011, actual numbers fluctuate daily.</i>		
<i>Source: ISAF</i>		

Progress towards Transition

The Afghan Government and ISAF continued the preparatory work needed to begin the transition process in the next set of provinces and districts. We expect the Afghan Government to announce formally the areas selected for the second phase of transition this autumn. 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

Key pieces of Afghan Air Force equipment have arrived in Afghanistan, including six fixed-wing flight simulators and three fixed-wing training aircraft. Collectively, these pieces of equipment represent the beginning of a significant uplift of capability and set the stage for the first indigenous Undergraduate Pilot Training class of 15 Afghan pilot candidates to begin in December.

As of 26 September there were 30,415 ANSF in NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan institutional training (20,180 with the Afghan National Army; 9,957 with the Afghan National Police and 638 with the Afghan Air Force).

ANP strength has now exceeded the October 2011 target. Attrition for the ANP as a whole did not meet the monthly target due to increased attrition in the Afghan Border Police and Afghan National Civil Order Police. However, attrition in the Afghan Uniformed Police, which forms the bulk of the police force, was lower than target. This reflects the more challenging environments in which the Border Police and National Civil Order Police operate.

Table Two: ANSF Growth to 31 August 2011

	Objective (31 October 2011)	Target Strength (31 August 2011)	Actual Strength (31 August 2011)	July Target Met
ANA:	171,600	162,108	169,076	Yes
ANP:	134,000	129,321	136,440	Yes
ANA Officers:	26,400	25,501	22,239	No
ANA NCOs:	59,000	55,700	45,790	No

Table Three: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	August Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	2.2%	No
ANP:	1.4%	1.61%	No
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.24%	Yes
Border Police	1.4%	1.54%	No
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	4.56%	No

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
October 2011**