

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
February 2011

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

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

Overview

ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) continue to make steady progress on extending security. ISAF commanders are confident that ISAF and Afghan military operations over the winter have significantly reduced insurgent capability, but the rising numbers of weapons found indicate clearly that the insurgents have every intention of stepping up their attacks. Recruitment of Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) remains ahead of target, but the standard of ANP leadership needs to be improved and the rate of turnover of recruits needs to be reduced. As I place this Report, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has announced that the following Provinces and Districts will begin the process of transition to Afghan security responsibility: Kabul (excluding Sorobi district); Panjsher Province; Central Bamyan Province; Western Herat; Lashkar Gah; Mazar-e-Sharif (Balkh Province); Mehtarlam (Laghman Province).

The Afghan Parliament's election of a new Speaker, after a protracted process, is an encouraging step forward, but further appointments need to be confirmed before the Parliament can play a full role in the legislative process. Stronger links are beginning to develop between central and local government in Helmand, through governance, rule of law and economic development programmes and better access to government-provided services including transport. This is essential to help the GIROA deliver basic services and win the support of the population. Concern remains over a lack of progress in certain areas, for example, women's rights. Through the High Peace Council (HPC) the Afghan Government is increasing its dialogue with its neighbours to promote regional engagement in the wider political process. This is an encouraging step forward towards building confidence across the region, which is clearly a long-term challenge.

Security

Violent incidents across Afghanistan

Violent incidents in February were at a level similar to February 2010. NATO has reported that, between December 2010-February 2011, coalition forces launched more than 1,600 operations and killed or captured about 350 insurgent leaders (*Source: ISAF press release 16 February 2011*). The ISAF leadership is confident that the insurgency has been significantly disrupted by the high tempo of ISAF and ANSF operations over the winter months. Whilst the overall level of insurgent activity may be lower now than in the summer months, elements of the insurgency continue to focus on soft targets capable of generating widespread media interest. On 14 February insurgents carried out a suicide attack on civilians at a shopping centre in Kabul, killing two security guards and wounding two other people. The attack was condemned by President Karzai and ISAF and is yet another demonstration of the insurgency's disregard for the safety of the civilian population. Civilian casualties are unacceptable whether caused by the insurgency or by ISAF or ANSF. Provision of security is the highest priority for most Afghans and civilian casualties only serve to undermine this. ISAF will continue to take considerable steps to reduce the number of innocent civilians affected by the conflict.

Weapons Caches Found and Cleared

The number of weapons caches found and cleared has been rising since November and is significantly higher than in February 2010. Between December 2010-February 2011, NATO raids found over 1,000 weapons caches, severely depleting the Taliban's weapons supply. A weapons cache may consist of weapons or other materiel which supports insurgent activities, including improvised explosive device (IED), components, uniforms and radios. Whilst it is reassuring that ISAF and Afghanistan forces are finding and clearing these caches, they do serve as another indicator that the insurgency intends to attempt to regain momentum.

Afghan National Security Forces

Progress continues to be made in developing the ANSF. By the middle of February the Afghan ANA had reached over 152,000 personnel and the ANP over 118,000. Both are still expected to meet the target numbers agreed at the London Conference in January 2010. However, as attrition rates, the rate at which personnel leave the organisation, in the ANA continue to run above the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) target (a rate of 2.8% per month in February against an objective of 1.4%), high levels of recruitment are still required to meet the October 2011 target of 171,600 ANA. In the ANP the attrition rate is an average of 18% pa, the target is 16.8%. Reducing attrition rates across the ANSF remains a key challenge in ensuring successful transition of security lead to the Afghans.

In February, Afghan forces carried out the largest air assault operation undertaken in over a year in central Helmand. This was to disrupt insurgent activity in the villages of Malgir and Kopak, in the Nahr-e Saraj district. The operation - *Operation Omid Shash (Hope Six)* - was supported by elements of 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment and the 1st Battalion Irish Guards, who are responsible for partnering and mentoring the Afghans. The level of support provided by ISAF troops on this occasion was minimal. The Afghans co-ordinated reconnaissance assets, artillery, counter-IED teams, fighter aircraft and helicopters and 1,000 ground troops, of which 750 were Afghan. All of these were commanded and controlled by the staff of the 3rd Brigade of 215 Maiwand Corps of the ANA, under the command of Brigadier General Sherin Shah.

Transition

On 28 February, the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal (*Transition*) Board issued its recommendations on the provinces and districts to be included in the first phase of transition of lead security responsibility to the ANSF. These recommendations were based primarily on progress against security requirements to enable transition to take place, but progress against governance and development criteria was also taken into account. The recommendations have been submitted to the North Atlantic Council and the GIRoA for their consideration.

The International Community's Military Contribution

Figure 1: Contributions to ISAF

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	90,000	68.2%
UK	9,500	7.2%
Germany	4,909	3.7%
France	3,979	3.0%
Italy	3,815	2.9%
Canada	2,900	2.2%
Poland	2,527	1.9%
Turkey	1,799	1.3%
Romania	1,726	1.3%
Australia	1,550	1.2%
Spain	1,499	1.1%
Others (37 nations)	7,907	6.0%
Current Total	132,203	100.00%

Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 4 March 2011, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF

The 47th Munich Security Conference took place from (4–6 February) while focussing largely on unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, it also highlighted the need for political progress in Afghanistan alongside the military campaign, and for the international community to remain engaged through to 2014 and beyond.

Reintegration

The HPC continued its schedule of roadshows to publicise the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme with events in Kunduz and Logar. In Helmand, Governor Mangal convened the Helmand Peace Council for the second time and established a Provincial Reintegration Support Team to drive forward reintegration activity at the local level. While this represents good progress, we are encouraging the Afghans to ensure that this activity forms part of a coherent and sustainable strategy over the longer term.

Parliament

The newly elected Afghan Parliament convened for the first time on 26 January. On 20 February, the President announced the appointment of the final third of Senators to the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House). On 27 February, Uzbek MP Abdul Rauf Ibrahimy was elected Speaker for the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) with 169 votes.

The Special Court, established by the Supreme Court to investigate allegations of electoral malpractice, continues to operate. As part of these investigations, the Attorney General's Office sealed the Independent Election Commission's (IEC) data centre in Kabul on 13 February. A number of provincial IEC offices were also subsequently sealed and partial or full recounts began in a number of provinces. The international community is concerned about recounts, the legal basis for which is not clear. On 15 February, UNAMA issued a statement reaffirming the international community's support for the independence of the Afghan electoral authorities and expressing the need for all parties to respect the integrity of the electoral process that led to the inauguration of Parliament.

Governance

The UK-funded Governance Performance Improvement Programme (GPIP) has supported the training of twenty women in Helmand Province to run their own businesses. The two-month programme, which was championed by the Governor of Helmand Province, gave women in Lashkar Gah access to intensive tailoring instruction. At the end of the course each participant received a sewing machine, a pair of scissors and enough cloth to start a tailoring business of their own.

Supported by both the UK and Denmark, Nad Ali has started to receive funds from the Afghan Government through the District Delivery Programme (DDP) to deliver basic services at the local level. The DDP is starting to deliver real benefits to local people, including the repair and construction of US\$200,000 worth of irrigation channels to help agriculture flourish. Arrangements have been made to construct two schools, ten wells and a commercial crop storage facility. Funds for Marjah and Nahr-e-Saraj districts have also been received at the provincial level. These will take forward plans to build health clinics, rehabilitate irrigations systems and provide literacy courses for adults alongside primary education. Both programmes aim to build stronger links between central and local government and the communities they serve.

Rule of Law

Modest progress continues to be made in strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of the police force in Helmand.

During February, the Helmand Police Training Centre continued to train a high number of new recruits to tackle police shortages in the province. This month also saw the graduation of the 2000th Patrolman, with the number of Non Commissioned Officers graduating rising to over 300. In addition, 120 Kabul trained and literate police officers also reported for duty in Helmand. They are currently undergoing training and induction before being allocated to districts.

Efforts are also being made to address the lack of intelligence-led police capability in Helmand and to build community engagement. In February, an increasing number of reports on insurgent activity,

such as the planting of IEDs, were received by the *CrimeStoppers* helpline. These are helping to inform Afghan police activity. An ANP initiative to provide education to school children at the Police Headquarters is building links between the police and public.

Progress was also made to ensure the Helmandi police have the infrastructure they need to perform their duties effectively. Throughout February, seventeen contracts for police building projects including checkpoints, precincts and stations were awarded to Afghan contractors.

Access to justice and the protection of rights in, and accountability of the justice system in Afghanistan continue to be of concern. On 7 February a third community justice seminar was held in Nahr-e-Saraj as part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team/District Stabilisation Team outreach initiative. The primary purpose was to educate the community about their rights and the justice system. The theme of the most recent seminar was human rights and the constitution. The seminar was attended by approximately 400-500 members of the community, of which 80-100 were women. Change is not possible overnight, but in the long term we hope events like these will promote a fairer justice sector in Afghanistan.

Counter Narcotics (CN)

In February trainers from the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime conducted an exercise as part of the Canadian-led “Dubai Process” to promote better working at a strategic and tactical level between Afghan and Pakistani counter narcotics and border officials. In total nine officers were trained as part of this SOCA-led exercise. The next stage is to build on the success of this exercise by encouraging co-operation between Afghan and Pakistani CN agencies on live counter narcotic operations.

Economic Development

The UK-funded Peace Dividend Trust (PDT) works in Afghanistan to help local companies win business contracts from international agencies active in the country. In February PDT in Helmand verified and listed 27 additional local companies on its database and will now seek to link them with forthcoming contracts. In an effort to help build local business, PDT-Helmand provided information on local businesses and their capabilities to the British Military’s Joint Force Support and distributed 23 copies of tenders for work to local companies.

In central Helmand over 50km of tarmac road construction is underway using UK funding, including 12km of the Lashkar Gah to Gereshk Highway and over 38km of secondary roads to link outlying districts with Lashkar Gah and Gereshk. This will enable people in Helmand to travel more safely and more quickly between their villages, districts and the main urban population centres to access markets and thus increase their income from licit crops. It will also help facilitate access to public services that the government provides such as schools, clinics and statutory justice.

In February the UK-funded Comprehensive Agriculture & Rural Development Facility (CARD-F) finalised its plan to enhance economic growth and agricultural development in Kama District in Nangahar Province. This plan was completed by CARD-F on behalf of the Afghan Government and in consultation with local communities and entrepreneurs. The plan will support poultry farming in the district and create over 100 jobs.

Human Rights

Women's Shelters

The GIRoA is planning to introduce new regulations for Afghan Women's Protection Centres. The legislation is designed to implement provisions of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law. It has some positive provisions such as the legal recognition of the Centres, but it also provides for close government oversight of them. Under the current draft, the GIRoA would appoint all the Directors and the Centres would be obliged to notify the police of every woman staying there. The Ministry of Women's Affairs would be responsible for the administration of the protection centres run by both the government and civil society organisations in Afghanistan. Women would be required to undergo medical checks on admission to the protection centre and on a monthly basis, once resident. If adopted in its current form, this regulation could jeopardise progress already made on women's rights and in providing a secure environment and access to legal advice for victims of domestic violence. Such close monitoring by the government and police is also likely to deter women from seeking refuge or reporting domestic violence. Whilst it is important that these centres are monitored, it is also important that civil society is able to operate them independently. The international community is participating in the current review of the draft regulation by the Criminal Justice Working Group to raise their concerns and to submit recommendations to the GIRoA.

Regional Engagement

On 18 February US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, delivered the Holbrooke Memorial Speech on Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Asia Society in New York. Her emphasis on the need for an intensification of regional diplomacy and the positive engagement of Afghanistan's neighbours marked an important acceleration of the regional track. Afghanistan is actively seeking to improve its bilateral relations with its regional neighbours and to develop strategies for improved regional co-operation.

The UK continues to engage in constructive bilateral discussions with important regional players. In early February the UK's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan met members of the Indian Government in New Delhi as part of an ongoing dialogue with India to encourage constructive Indian engagement as a key regional player. On 15 February the Foreign Secretary and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov released a joint statement on Afghanistan. They agreed to continue to work together in support of the Government of Afghanistan towards stability and economic viability, particularly in the fight against the narcotics trade.

On 22-25 February a delegation of the HPC led by Chairman Burhanuddin Rabbani, visited Turkey. This was the HPC's second official overseas visit outreach, following a trip to Pakistan in January as part of a strategy to engage with countries in the region. The delegation met with President Gul of Turkey, Prime Minister Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Davutoglu and Speaker of Parliament Sahin. This signals an important step in promoting regional engagement in the political process. The UK, with the international community, will continue to encourage the Afghan Government to intensify its engagement with its neighbours.

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
April 2011**