

## **AFGHANISTAN**

### **MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT**

**April 2012**

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 seventeenth report covers progress in April 2012. 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 NATO Joint Foreign and Defence Ministers Meeting on 18 April, the UK announced a contribution of £70 million per annum to help fund the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) for a period after our forces withdraw from their combat role at the end of 2014. Developing strong and capable Afghan security forces that will help foster enduring stability in the country is critical to our long-term strategy in Afghanistan. Their continued viability is in our national interest and that of our partners. We must ensure that Afghanistan can never again be used as a safe haven for terrorist groups, such as al Qaeda, to plan and launch attacks against the UK and our allies. This contribution is aligned with international objectives for the Chicago Summit and underlines our enduring commitment to a stable and secure Afghanistan after 2014.

#### **G8 SUMMIT**

At the G8 Summit on 18 May, Heads of State endorsed the Tokyo Conference process that will produce a blueprint for Afghanistan's sustainable economic development for the 'Transformation Decade' (2015-2024). Heads of State looked forward to making long-term commitments at Tokyo, and emphasised mutual accountability and governance improvements, building on the agreements reached at the Bonn Conference last year. The G8 also agreed to support efforts to encourage private sector investment in Afghanistan and the region, and to increase regional integration and trade.

We now look forward to the Tokyo Conference in July when the international community and the Government of Afghanistan must agree long-term mutual commitments for the

Transformation Decade, with concrete pledges from donor partners for at least the period 2015-2017. It is vital that we and our international partners help to provide continuity through to the point of transition and immediately beyond.

The UK continues to provide support for Afghanistan's development needs, including for women and girls. In April the UK provided funding for 15 women's organisations working on improving access to justice, conflict resolution and peace building through the *Tawanmandi* Strengthening Civil Society Programme which the Secretary of State for International Development launched last year. UK support to the Zardozi project has also had a major impact, increasing the monthly incomes of women participating in the project by 123%.

### **NATO Summit, Chicago**

At the NATO Chicago Summit on 20-21 May, the international community demonstrated its enduring support to Afghanistan beyond the end of security transition. Plans were discussed for future funding of the ANSF and NATO's post-2014 role was agreed. This sent a clear message to the Afghan people that we will not abandon them, and a clear message to the insurgency that they cannot wait us out. We will provide fuller details in our May report.

On 13 May, the Afghan Government announced the areas to be included in Tranche Three of the transition process. This tranche includes Nahr-e-Saraj, which is in the area of UK operations. We will be reporting more fully on the detail of the Tranche Three announcement in our May report.

### **Political**

#### **Reconciliation and Reintegration**

Salahuddin Rabbani was appointed as the new Chair of the High Peace Council on 14 April. We welcome this and hope that it will bring fresh momentum towards an inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan. The Taliban's suspension of talks over the proposed political office in Qatar continued through April, but this does not alter our support for efforts to promote a political process to help bring peace and stability. Nationwide, over 4,000 insurgents have now enrolled on the formal reintegration programme, which is closely supported by the UK.

### **Strengthening the Afghan State**

#### **Rule of Law**

##### **National**

The Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) is an Afghan-led facility which provides a national detention, investigation, prosecution and judicial capability for the most serious narcotics cases. In April it convicted 27 individuals for narcotics offences including prison sentences of up to 20 years. They also seized over 4 kgs of heroin, 633 kgs of opium, 186 kgs of morphine, 942 kgs of hashish and about 100 litres of chemical precursor.

April saw the finalisation of preparations for an international police conference scheduled for May in Kabul. The conference will start consultation on the role, structure and

professionalisation of the Afghan National Police, the reform of the Ministry of the Interior and the links between the police and the justice system.

### Helmand

In April, the new Chief Judge for the province was sworn in and started work in Lashkar Gah. Sixty-two judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, police investigators and civil society members attended 10 days of training on tackling crime.

Long-running friction between the Marjah District Governor (DG) and District Community Council (DCC) over claims of DG corruption led to the resignation of the DCC chairman after Governor Mangal rejected a complaint that was without substantive proof. Fourteen Nad-e Ali District Community Councillors were referred to the Attorney General's office for alleged misappropriation of wheat seed donated by the Indian Government for distribution to poor families.

### **Economic and Social Development**

The UK continued to work with the Afghan Government to prepare for the Tokyo Development Conference in July. Along with international partners, we are working to develop a 'mutual accountability framework', to be endorsed at Tokyo, that will set out our joint commitments to the people of Afghanistan up to transition in 2014 and beyond. The long-term peace and stability of Afghanistan will depend on continued financial support from the international community to help meet security and development needs after international forces withdraw. For their part the Government of Afghanistan must continue to make progress against the IMF programme benchmarks, as well as other vital economic and governance reforms to ensure that our support delivers lasting results.

The UK-funded forensic audit looking at the Kabul Bank fraud was completed in April. The auditors delivered a final report to the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Afghanistan. President Karzai subsequently issued a decree stating that Kabul Bank debtors who do not repay their loans by 4 June will be prosecuted before a Special Court. The forensic audit report will provide evidence for such prosecutions.

### Economic Development

UK assistance to the Ministry of Mines helped the Ministry to develop a new Minerals Law, which will help ensure the people of Afghanistan benefit from the country's mineral wealth. The law addresses ownership of land and mining rights, including tenure and transferability. This is important for private investment. It also clarifies the role of the Government, reinforcing transparent licensing processes for mining activity and making provisions for adequate environmental protection. The Ministry is currently consulting on the final draft of the law and expects to take it to their Cabinet in early June.

UK support to the *Zardozi* project, which seeks to increase income opportunities for women producers and entrepreneurs, has had a major impact. The monthly income of women joining the project towards the end of 2011 was Afs 446 (US \$ 9.49). Since then, average monthly income has grown to Afs 994 (US \$21.15), an increase of 123%.

The UK funded Helmand Growth Programme was revised in April. This included shifting some activities to the national level ahead of security transition in 2014. The revised programme also focuses more on building the capacity of local institutions, such as the Afghan Investment Support Agency and Helmand Business Association, to ensure they can support implementation of the new Bost Agricultural Business Park. When complete, the park will provide a base for local business development.

Research into how the Government and donors can help add value to the production and sale of agricultural produce in Helmand continued with a successful meeting on the dairy sector. This brought together dairy producers and retailers in Lashkar Gah. The second round of meetings with nomadic Kuchi farmers identified grazing patterns, vaccinations and artificial insemination to improve breeding as possible areas for interventions. This work will help to boost farmers' incomes in a province where agriculture is the backbone of the economy.

The contract for construction of the Marjah Five Ways Junction Bridge in Helmand has been awarded. The project will contribute to linking a key agricultural area to the provincial capital, so that farmers have better access to markets for their produce.

### Social Development

A total of 27 organisations – 15 of them women's organisations – received funding in April from the UK's *Tawanmandi* programme for strengthening Afghan civil society, which the Secretary of State for International Development launched last year. These organisations will now take forward a range of projects focusing on improving justice, conflict resolution and peace-building.

In Helmand, the UK-funded Kartelagan Comprehensive Health Centre and Lashkar Gah Medical Training Centre were officially handed over to the Department of Public Health and training materials were delivered to enable courses to begin. The contract was also signed for the construction of the UK funded Qaleh Bost Basic Health Centre, which is due for completion in 2013. These projects will help to boost the Afghan Government's capacity to offer reliable and sustainable health services to local people in Helmand.

### **Counter Narcotics**

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released its 2012 Opium Risk Assessment Survey on 17 April. The report predicts likely opium cultivation levels in Afghanistan this year. The report predicted that there is unlikely to be an increase in poppy cultivation in Helmand or Kandahar and that Kandahar may see a further decrease in cultivation. The provinces together produce the vast majority of Afghanistan's opium,. The report predicts a more mixed picture in other parts of the country. Actual cultivation levels in 2012 will not be known until UNODC publishes its Annual Opium Survey later this year.

Eradication of opium poppy continues. By 23 April 6,257 hectares had been eradicated compared with 2,243 hectares at the same point in 2011. In Helmand, where eradication concluded on 26 April, UNODC figures indicate almost 4,000 hectares of poppy have been eradicated since operations began on 6 March 2012, an increase of over 50% on 2011.

## Security

### **Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) Growth and Capability**

On 18 April the Defence Secretary announced that from 2015 the UK will provide £70m a year to help fund the ANSF in the years after our combat role ends. This funding will be kept under review and will contribute to a wider \$4.1bn fund that is being raised by the Afghans and the wider international community. The majority of contributions are expected to be announced in the coming weeks. The UK's contribution will be provided in addition to our lead supporting role at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy.

**Table One: ANSF Growth to 30 April 2012**

	<b>Objective</b> (30 November 2012)	<b>Target Strength</b> (30 April 2012)	<b>Actual Strength</b> (30 April 2012)	<b>April Target Met</b>
<b>ANA:</b>	195,000	181,617	197,189	Yes
<b>ANP:</b>	157,000	149,237	149,208	No
<b>ANA Officers:</b>	29,644	28,377	24,965	No
<b>ANA NCOs:</b>	72,123	65,355	53,857	No

**Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates**

	<b>Target Monthly Attrition</b>	<b>Actual Monthly Attrition</b>	<b>April Target Met</b>
<b>ANA:</b>	1.4%	1.6%	No
<b>ANP:</b>	1.4%	1.3%	Yes
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.3%	Yes
Border Police	1.4%	0.9%	Yes
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	2.0%	No

### **Violence Levels**

Now that spring has arrived, insurgent activity across Afghanistan has continued to increase. This is in line with historic and seasonal norms. While violent incidents in April were comparable with April 2011 levels, it is significant that year-to-date figures remain lower than in 2011. These trends remind us that there is still work to be done, but also reflect the high tempo of operations in the country as the Afghans, supported by ISAF, continue to exert pressure on the insurgency.

Regional Command (South West), which includes Task Force Helmand in the UK's Area of Operations, saw a steady increase in insurgent activity in the first half of April. However, in the second half of the month enemy activity decreased due to the onset of the poppy harvest.

This temporary lull in activity is expected to last into early May, after which point we can expect to see a gradual increase in violent incidents, with activity peaking during the summer months.

In Helmand province, insurgents conducted an attack on the Musa Qal'eh District Police headquarters on 11 April. The attack resulted in the deaths of nine members of the ANSF and injured the District Chief of Police. The incident is the latest in a series of attacks and assassination attempts on government and security officials across Afghanistan and illustrated insurgent intent to target those who most threaten their campaign.

### **Kabul Attacks**

After a break of 168 days<sup>1</sup> the insurgency finally succeeded in their efforts to launch a high-profile attack in the Afghan capital. On 15 April, insurgents carried out coordinated attacks against a number of high profile targets within the city including the British Embassy. Additional and associated complex attacks took place simultaneously elsewhere in Afghanistan. The ANSF responded quickly and efficiently to the attacks with only limited assistance from ISAF. Their performance demonstrated their increasing professionalism and showed improvements in their capability since the last insurgent “spectacular” attacks in Kabul in September 2011.

Tactically the attacks, which were claimed by the Taliban, were not successful and did not demonstrate a new or improved level of insurgent capability. High-profile, “spectacular” attacks are deliberately targeted to distort evidence of campaign progress and affect perceptions of security among the Afghan population and the international community.

Although the Afghan National Directorate of Security has successfully disrupted a number of threats to Kabul in recent months, the fact that these attacks were able to happen is nevertheless damaging and has contributed to speculation of an intelligence failure. Continuing improvements to ANSF capacity and particularly intelligence capability should improve the situation but will not guarantee that all attacks on the capital can be prevented.

The 15-16 April attacks should be viewed in context. Kabul, as capital city, is home to 20% of the population, has a large number of high-profile targets and has a symbolic significance for the insurgents. But it experiences less than 1% of all violent incidents. This gap in high-profile attacks was the longest since 2009.

While the attacks had only a minimal tactical impact, they illustrate the insurgents’ intent to conduct a campaign of violence in Afghanistan and remind us that there is still a job to do. As the insurgents attempt to regain the campaign momentum over the summer months ,it is likely that they will continue to attempt to carry out similar attacks to sustain their relevance. The ANSF, supported by ISAF, are prepared for this, but we must expect further challenges ahead.

### **Transfer of Authority**

Transfer of Authority from 20 Armoured Brigade to 12 Mechanised Brigade took place on 20 April officially marking the end of Herrick 15.

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding the sectarian Ashura attacks in December 2011.

## UK Force Levels

On 26 April in a statement to the House, the Defence Secretary explained how the UK would reduce its conventional force levels in Afghanistan by 500 to 9,000 by the end of the year. This follows a commitment made by the Prime Minister in July 2011. The majority of the 500 will be made up of combat troops, reflecting the increasing capability of the ANSF. This reduction in our force levels is consistent with the transition process and the decisions have been made using military advice.

**Table Three: Security Incidents**

Type of incident	Definition	Change from March 2012	Comparison with April 2011
Security incidents	Enemy action and explosive hazards, both executed attacks and ‘potential’ attacks (e.g. an IED found and cleared)	↑ Rise in attacks	↔ No significant change
Enemy initiated attacks	Attacks executed by insurgents (This does not include ‘potential’ attacks)	↑ Rise in attacks	↔ No significant change
Complex attacks	Attacks conducted by multiple hostile elements employing at least two distinct classes of weapon	↑ Rise in attacks	↓ Fall in attacks

**Table Four: International Contributions to ISAF**

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	90,000	69.8%
UK	9,500	7.4%
Germany	4,900	3.5%
Italy	3,816	3.0%
France	3,308	2.6%
Poland	2,457	2.0%
Romania	1,843	1.5%
Australia	1,550	1.2%
Spain	1,481	1.2%
Turkey	1,327	1.0%
Others (38 nations)	8779	6.8%
<b>Current Total</b>	<b>128,961</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<i>Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 18 April 2012, actual numbers fluctuate daily.</i>		
<i>Source: ISAF</i>		