

**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

**AFGHANISTAN**

**MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT**

**September 2013**

The UK is 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 thirty-first report covers progress in September 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 Foreign Secretary announced drawdown plans for the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in a written statement on 9 September. The PRT has already begun to decrease in size. By December 2013 we envisage a small PRT political and governance team moving to Camp Bastion, followed by the final closure of the PRT in March 2014.

On 3 September, the Independent Election Commission co-chaired a meeting of the ELECT II Project Board with UNAMA. The IEC provided an update on voter registration and preparations for the elections, and donors pledged additional funds to support the electoral preparations. Overall donors pledged USD$134m.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, visited Afghanistan 15-17 September. Her visit focussed on three key areas – the importance of ensuring gains made on human rights are consolidated, the issue of violence against women and the future of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

On 1 September, President Karzai appointed Omar Daudzai, the previous Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan, as Acting Interior Minister, replacing Mujtaba Patang.

The Home Secretary visited Afghanistan 22 – 24 September, meeting with President Karzai, the Ministers of Interior and Refugees, the Head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghanistan’s Intelligence Agency, and international ambassadors. The visit focused on a range of security and criminal issues affecting the UK (principally terrorism, drugs and migration).

On 1 September, the UK assumed lead nation status at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy. The Academy, which is designed to develop the future leaders of the Afghan National Army, will begin training by the end of October.

On 27 September, the Prime Minister announced that the UK will host the 2014 NATO Summit in what will be the final year of the ISAF combat mission in Afghanistan. The precise date for the Summit has yet to be finalised but its themes will be discussed in greater detail at the October NATO Defence Ministerial meeting in Brussels.

**Strengthening the Afghan State**

**Political**

On 3 September, the Independent Election Commission co-chaired a meeting of the ELECT II Project Board with UNAMA. The IEC provided an update on voter registration and preparations for the elections, and donors pledged additional funds to support the electoral preparations. Overall donors pledged USD$134m.

Following the procedure set out in the IEC Structure & Duties Law, President Karzai chose the five members of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission from a shortlist of fifteen.

The registration window for candidates in 2014’s presidential and provincial council elections opened on 16 September, following the timings set out in the Independent Election Commission’s electoral calendar published last year. The window is open for three weeks during which candidates for the presidential election need to provide 100,000 signatures of supporters from a minimum of 20 provinces and pay a deposit of one million Afghanis. Provincial Council candidates require signatures of between 200 and 600 supporters depending on the population size of their Province and a deposit of twenty thousand Afghanis.

The UK continues to encourage positive relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. President Karzai visited Islamabad on 26-27 August, at Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s request.They agreed a set of positive measures on both regional and bilateral trade, including holding a meeting of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission in Kabul, and working for full implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). They also pledged to strengthen bilateral co-operation in sectors such as communications, energy, roads, railways, and regional development. This included the construction of a second lane for the Torkham-Jalalabad road, an extension of the Lahore-Peshawar motorway to Kabul, and taking forward power projects such as ‘CASA 1000’ which will transport electricity from Central Asia, and a dam on the Kunar River to provide up to 1500 MW of power.

In support of the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process, seven Taliban prisoners were reportedly released by Pakistan on 7 September, shortly after President Karzai’s visit. This was followed by the announcement of the release of former senior Taliban commander, Mullah Baradar, by Pakistan on 20 September. On 25 September, in the margins of the UN General Assembly Ministerial Week, the Foreign Secretary met with Afghan Foreign Minister Dr Zalmai Rassoul and Pakistani National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz. Discussions covered economic co-operation, security co-operation and the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process.

On 19 September, 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 over the last three months. The UK, represented by Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant, highlighted the important progress made on the transition of security to Afghans and preparations for elections in 2014. In addition to outlining the challenges ahead, the UK reiterated its long-term support to building an inclusive and prosperous Afghanistan.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, visited Afghanistan 15-17 September.  During her first visit to the country, Navi Pillay met President Karzai, senior Ministers, civil society activists, and the Chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), amongst others.  Her visit focussed on three key areas – the importance of ensuring gains made on human rights are consolidated, the issue of violence against women and the future of the AIHRC.  At her departing press conference she recognised that significant progress had been made in the protection and promotion of human rights, but also feared that the momentum was waning.  She concluded by saying that Afghanistan needs to brace itself so that the tumultuous changes that will occur before the end of 2014 do not trigger a serious deterioration in human rights.

The Foreign Secretary announced drawdown plans for the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in a written statement on 9 September. The PRT has already begun to decrease in size. By December 2013, we envisage a small PRT political and governance team moving to Camp Bastion, followed by the final closure of the PRT in March 2014. As agreed by President Karzai and the international community, all PRTs across Afghanistan will close by the end of 2014 in keeping with the process of transition to an Afghan lead. In preparation, the PRT has been working with Afghan and international partners to transition our work on rule of law, governance and development to Afghan control or incorporated into national programmes led from Kabul. Plans are in place for most of the remaining programmes to be transitioned by the end of 2013.

**Rule of Law**

On 1 September, President Karzai appointed Omar Daudzai, previous Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan, as Acting Interior Minister, replacing Mujtaba Patang.

The new Afghan National Police Lashkar Gah Training Centre (LTC) officially opened on 10 September. The LTC is now running smoothly under Afghan management, following the departure of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and Police Mentoring Advisory Group from the LTC facility.

Construction of a new Vocational Training Centre at Helmand Provincial Prison was completed in September. We are now working with the Afghan authorities to equip the centre to run workshops and activities for inmates.

**Counter Narcotics**

The Home Secretary visited Afghanistan 22 – 24 September, meeting with President Karzai, the Ministers of Interior and Refugees, the Head of the NDS, and international ambassadors. The visit focused on a range of security and criminal issues affecting the UK (principally terrorism, drugs and migration). There were several useful exchanges which demonstrated Afghan interest in continuing UK support on counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism, but also in applying UK models to Afghan policing. There was agreement on the increasing challenges faced by Afghanistan, and international partners, in tackling a growing drugs trade, and acknowledgement of the importance of political will and effective collaboration post 2014.

**Economic and Social Development**

By the end of September, the DFID-funded Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility (CARD-F) reported that they had supported the establishment of 135 beekeeping farms in the Khash and Keshm districts of Badakhshan. This is part of the broader effort to deliver economic development packages through the programme, and to help farmers, traders and consumers benefit from improved processes and market linkages. CARD-F and similar programmes are part of the effort to support the role of the agricultural sector as a key employer and wealth creator in Afghanistan.

DFID started to deliver its next phases of support to key economic ministries, with Technical Assistance teams in the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, beginning work in early September. The UK provides £10m of support to the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, and £2m of support to the Ministry of Commerce, for work to deliver organisational reforms and better management.

According to reports received in September by the Helmand PRT, recent polio eradication activities in Helmand have been successful and there have been no reported cases of the disease in the province this year. The positive results of 2013 are due to an increase in the number of polio campaigns, wider coverage and commitment from local leaders and implementing partners. PRT support in this area includes facilitating pre-campaign planning for the Department of Public Health, UNICEF, WHO, line ministries, the Provincial Governor and other key figures. Further, following engagement with PRT staff, UNICEF confirmed its plans to increase their activities in Helmand with a greater focus on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and routine immunisations.

**Governance Reform**

Through the Strengthening Provincial Administration and Delivery (SPAD) programme the UK has helped the Government of Afghanistan to provide food for 400 children in orphanages and kindergartens in Helmand; to distribute seeds and fertiliser for local farmers in Uruzgan; and to provide running costs for district level courts and the Attorney General’s office in Bamyan.

**Security**

As expected, insurgent attacks and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) casualty rates increased through September following a summer period which was quieter than previous years. Thus far the ANSF has shown itself to be a strong and effective fighting force which is concentrating its forces around the major communication routes and urban areas. However, there is evidence of increasing insurgent pressure in some rural parts of Sangin and Nahr e-Saraj.

More significantly, the insurgency has failed to pose a fundamental threat to the ANSF and the Government of Afghanistan throughout this fighting season. Historically the annual fighting season has drawn to a close in the autumn and, although the ISAF drawdown and forthcoming presidential elections in April 2014 pose a different dynamic, with the insurgency likely to focus on these events, we would expect insurgent activity this winter to be broadly consistent with seasonal norms.

**ANSF**

Overall, the ANSF has continued to lead major tactical operations that are achieving tangible results; during September, the ANSF conducted a series of Corps level clearance operations designed to destroy insurgency sanctuaries and communications throughout Regional Command South West. The operations were conducted with only limited assistance from ISAF military enablers and advisor assistance. As a result of these operations, the ANSF successfully cleared dozens of IEDs and weapons caches, as well as killing, wounding and detaining over 100 insurgents. On 28 September, the insurgency overran a District Centre for the first time (Kira wa Munjan, Badakshan Province); however the ANSF quickly regained the ground.

Alongside these tactical successes, the ANSF has also focused on developing capabilities that will enable it to have enduring strategic capabilities. The UK Defence Medical Services have been training and mentoring Afghan National Army (ANA) surgical teams at the Shorabak Role 2 medical treatment facility near Camp Bastion in Helmand. This facility is due to be expanded and has already been re-named the Regional Military Hospital. In mid September the facility successfully managed the care of a single limb amputation; the procedure was well managed and extended post operative care was delivered. This case marked the first occasion in which all parts of the Shorabak ANA medical team were able to care for a complex casualty. This included pre-operative care, surgery, post operative care, diagnostic services and administration/logistics support.

The ANSF has been able to treat minor ‘Category C’ casualties since December 2012 and by the end of this year, will have developed sufficient medical capabilities to take over responsibility for dealing with its own casualties that require treatment within 4 hours (known as Category B casualties).

On 15 September, the latest in a series of attacks on prominent Afghan women tragically resulted in the death of Lieutenant Bibi Negar, the most senior female police officer in Helmand. This follows the violent attack of a female Afghan senator and her daughter in August and the fatal shooting of Lieutenant Colonel Malalai Kakar (Afghan Uniform Police) in 2008. However, on 8 September, the Afghan MP Fariba Ahmadi Kakar and her children were released by the Taliban in a prisoner exchange after being held in captivity for approximately four weeks.

Whilst the ANSF are matching and largely overpowering the insurgency on the battlefield, and providing effective security in the main population centres, the insurgency still maintains the will and capability to inflict harm on high ranking ANSF officials and members of the Afghan Government. Such assassinations, kidnapping and violent reprisals, including against women participating in Afghan politics and decision-making, provide a sober reminder of the difficult challenges that still lie ahead. The general decline in reported nationwide violence this summer is offset by a rise in targeted killings of these high value individuals. This is commensurate with the clear Taliban objective of intimidating the Afghan Government and wider population. It is likely the insurgency will increasingly employ these asymmetric tactics.

**Afghan National Army Officer Academy**

On 1 September, the UK assumed lead nation status at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy. The Academy, which is designed to develop the future leaders of the Afghan National Army, will open by the end of October. It will then build up to full operating capacity in the summer 2014, when three separate training courses will be running concurrently.

**2014 NATO Summit**

On 27 September, the Prime Minister announced that the UK will host the 2014 NATO Summit. One of the main themes of the Summit will be Afghanistan in what will be the final year of the ISAF combat mission. The date for the Summit has yet to be finalised but its themes will be discussed in greater detail at the October NATO Defence Ministerial meeting in Brussels.

**House of Commons Defence Committee - New Inquiry**

On 6 September, the House of Commons Defence Committee announced a new Inquiry into Afghanistan which will address, amongst other issues, UK drawdown and redeployment, ANSF capability and Pakistan. The MoD, with input from the FCO and DFID, has been asked to provide a written evidence memorandum by 18 October to assist the Committee with its Inquiry.

**Drawdown and Redeployment**

In line with transition and drawdown, the current UK force level now stands at around 6,800, down from 9,000 at the start of the year. This will reduce further to 5,200 by the end of 2013, notwithstanding occasional fluctuations due to temporary surges into theatre.

British bases ‘Dara’ and ‘Patrol Base 2’ closed on the 7 September and the 29 September respectively. ‘Oulette’ was transferred to the ANSF on the 11 September. As of 30 September 2013, we have redeployed 1,243 vehicles and major equipments (VAME) and 1,740 twenty foot equivalent units (TEUs) of materiel from Afghanistan. This represents more than a third of all VAME and TEUs which are due to be redeployed between now and the end of 2014.

**More Football Success**

Following last month’s famous victory against Pakistan, the Afghanistan football team won the South Asian Cup for the first time in its history on 11 September after victories against Nepal and India. There was nationwide celebration with football currently proving to be a strong unifying force in the country.

**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.

**Table One: ANSF Growth to 20 Aug 2013**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Strength(Aug 2013) | Actual Strength(Aug 2013) | Aug Target Met |
| ANA: | 187,000 | 185,300 | NO |
| AAF: | 6,900 | 6,900 | YES |
| ANP: | 157,000 | 152,700 | NO |

**Table Two:  ANSF Attrition Rates**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Monthly Attrition | Actual Monthly Attrition | Aug Target Met |
| ANA: | 1.4% | 2.4% | NO |
| AAF: | 1.4% | 0.5% | YES |
| ANP: | 1.4% | 1.6% | NO |
| Uniformed Police | 1.4% | 1.6% | NO |
| Border Police | 1.4% | 2.1% | NO |
| National Civil  Order Police | 1.4% | 2.2% | NO |

**Table Three: International Contributions to ISAF**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Contribution | % of Total |
| US | 60,000 | 68.8% |
| UK | 6,800 | 7.8% |
| Germany | 4,400 | 5.0% |
| Italy  | 2,825 | 3.2% |
| Georgia | 1,561 | 1.8% |
| Poland | 1,177 | 1.3% |
| Romania | 1,077 | 1.2% |
| Turkey | 1,036 | 1.2% |
| Australia | 1,031 | 1.2% |
| Canada | 950 | 1.1% |
| Others (39 nations) | 5,450 | 6.2% |
| Current Total: 87,207  |
| *The above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 01 Aug 2013, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF* |

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**September 2013**