

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
April 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 seventh report covers progress in April 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

On 30 April, three UK military personnel were killed and six seriously injured when their Mastiff Armoured Vehicle struck an improvised explosive device while conducting routine vulnerable area checks in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand Province.

The insurgency launched its 2013 'Khaled Bin Walid' fighting season on 28 April to coincide with Mujahideen Victory Day. Reminiscent of previous years, there was a general increase in attacks across Afghanistan to mark the start of their new fighting season but these were largely ineffective.

The UK agreed to provide funding of up to £4.5 million to help strengthen women's political participation ahead of and during the 2014 presidential/provincial and 2015 parliamentary elections. Support will be provided for female candidates, including workshops and direct training, so that they can communicate with voters and improve their prospects in the 2014/15 elections.

Tensions along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border continued throughout April. Afghanistan accused Pakistan of building up a border post on the Afghan side of the Durrand Line. In a military-to-military meeting on 15 April, the two sides agreed that new construction would halt and be dismantled.

NATO Foreign Ministers met in Brussels on 23 April. Ministers discussed progress in planning for the post-2014 mission and the international community's continuing commitment to a

stable, secure and sovereign Afghanistan, and the pledge made at Chicago to fund the Afghan National Security Forces. Following the Foreign Ministers' meeting, US Secretary of State Kerry, Afghan President Karzai and Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Kayani held a trilateral meeting in Brussels on 24 April.

Strengthening the Afghan State

Political

President Karzai held a consultative meeting on 9 April on the appointment of a new chairperson for the Independent Election Commission (IEC). A number of key political opposition figures did not attend the meeting, and it was decided that the appointment would be made after the passage of electoral reforms due in the coming weeks which could redefine the appointments process. Fazal Ahmad Manawi will continue to hold the position until his successor is appointed.

On 14 April, the Afghan Parliament passed a draft IEC Structure and Duties Law, and sent it to the Office of the President for approval. The draft included provisions relating to the creation of a permanent Electoral Complaints Commission with no foreign observers on its panel and moving to limit the power of the President to appoint the chairperson of the IEC. After considering the draft, President Karzai returned it to Parliament on 29 April citing advice from the Supreme Court and Constitutional Oversight Commission that the draft law was unconstitutional.

The Wolesi Jirga (the Lower House of the Afghan Parliament) continued to work through the articles of the draft overarching Electoral Law which remains controversial. MPs are voting on individual clauses in the draft and many potentially divisive issues have yet to be debated. It is likely discussions will continue well into May.

A two day event focused on encouraging women to participate in the democratic process was held on 15-16 April, hosted by the National Democratic Institute. Approximately 200 female parliamentarians, political party officials, provincial council members and young and emerging leaders met in Kabul to network, share expertise, and develop concrete strategies to promote women's political participation between now and the elections in 2014 and beyond. On 17 April the IEC held its first coordination meeting on gender and elections preparations. Representatives from relevant ministries, the UN and civil society attended.

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On 26 April Baroness Warsi attended the Istanbul Process Ministerial Conference in Almaty. The Istanbul Process supports stability and development in Afghanistan and its wider region. The final Declaration encouraged implementation of six regional confidence-building measures, reiterated a commitment to continued political dialogue, welcomed an Afghan-owned inclusive peace process which respects the Afghan constitution, including its provisions for human rights for men and women, and called for the successful conduct of

the 2014 presidential elections. During the UK's intervention, Baroness Warsi welcomed regional support to Afghanistan and re-committed the UK to play its part, in particular through its support to confidence-building measures in counter-narcotics, counter terrorism, disaster management and trade, commerce and investment.

Tensions along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border continued throughout April. Afghanistan accused Pakistan of building up a border post on the Afghan side of the Durrand Line. In a military-to-military meeting on 15 April, the two sides agreed that new construction would halt and be dismantled. Following the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting, US Secretary of State Kerry, Afghan President Karzai and Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Kayani held a trilateral meeting in Brussels on 24 April. UK work to encourage a stronger and more stable Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship, through our trilateral process, continues. Despite challenges, both sides are clear that they remain committed to this process.

The Taliban has still not taken up the opportunity to open officially a political office in Doha. Our message to them remains that entering a peace process is a chance for Afghans to sit down together and help shape their country's future.

Rule of Law and Counter Narcotics

The Afghan Attorney General's Office has submitted appeal documents against the entirety of the Kabul Bank verdict. It is not yet clear which court will take forward the appeal case. A separate line of appeal has been lodged by the Afghanistan Bank, which seeks more lenient sentences against some of the bank regulators involved in the fraud. The UK continues to push for stronger convictions, to the full extent of Afghan law, and a money-laundering conviction to allow asset-recovery abroad. The UK is also providing technical assistance to the prosecutors and for asset recovery.

A serious security incident which began on 3 March at Helmand Provincial Prison has now been resolved. The incident was initially contained by the Afghan authorities, who then worked to restore order to the prison. The Afghan authorities succeeded in resolving the situation peacefully and the prison is now back to normal, working order. Workshops and normal prison routine has been re-established. Construction work on the Women's Detention Facility, Training Wing and Rehabilitation Centre, halted during the incident, has now restarted.

Financial support to the Helmand Governor-led poppy crop eradication programme concluded on 12 April when the Governor-led Eradication campaign came to an end. As part of the UK's counter-narcotics efforts, support was conditional on eradication being conducted within agreed target zones (set out by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics) where alternative, licit livelihoods were available. UK support was reduced due to difficulty in confirming that this condition was being observed. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) will publish verified crop eradication figures later this year. UNODC published the second phase of Risk Assessment Report on 2013 Opium Cultivation (15 April 2013), providing an early indication of overall poppy cultivation trends. It highlighted increased cultivation in Helmand and Kandahar and the potential loss of 'poppy-free' status in three provinces. The predictions are disappointing, but not surprising given continuing high opium

prices and an improvement in the conditions for growing poppy this year. British Embassy Kabul has encouraged the Afghan Government to act swiftly in response to these predictions to prevent provinces from losing their poppy-free status.

Economic and Social Development

On International Mine Awareness Day (4 April) the UK's Ambassador to Afghanistan announced that the International Development Secretary had approved a £9.23m, five year programme with the HALO mine clearance trust to clear all remaining landmines and unexploded ordnance from the province of Herat by 2018. 129,000 families have so far benefited from UK funded mine clearance operations and this second phase will allow a further 11,646 families to reclaim land for productive use.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance obstruct potential agricultural areas (including grazing land). Agriculture is responsible for around 30% of Afghanistan's GDP and employs around 80% of the workforce, so landmine contamination is a major constraint to economic growth.

In Helmand, the first 5km of the UK/UAE-funded upgrade of Route 611 in northern Helmand has been completed. On current estimations the road should be completed slightly ahead of schedule in early 2014, allowing easier access to economic centres and basic services. While concerns about attacks on the contractor have not materialised in the first 5km of construction sustained engagement with the provincial government has been necessary in order to address local allegations about quality and corruption.

As part of a new DFID funded project to encourage private sector growth in Helmand private enterprise, consultants, Flag International, have established a presence in Lashkar Gah. Flag will work with the Helmand National Investors' Association to improve the support they provide to Helmand's business community.

Governance

In April, the UK agreed to provide funding of up to £4.5 million to help strengthen women's political participation (as candidates, leaders and voters) ahead of and during the 2014 presidential/provincial and 2015 parliamentary elections. Support will be provided for female candidates, including workshops and direct training, so that they can reach out to voters and improve their prospects in the 2014/15 elections. The programme will also encourage formal and informal outreach to help broaden support for women's political participation.

In April seven line ministries in Helmand received the first allocation of funding for this financial year through Afghan Government systems under the UK's Strengthening Provincial Administration and Delivery (SPAD) programme. This programme helps the Government of Afghanistan to run and maintain services its citizens have deemed a priority, including provision of justice in remote districts.

Security

On 30 April, three UK military personnel were killed, and six seriously injured, when their Mastiff Armoured Vehicle struck an improvised explosive device while conducting routine vulnerable area checks in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand Province. This was the largest UK multiple casualty incident for over a year and the first fatalities suffered during Op Herrick 18 (Apr – Oct 13).

The insurgency launched their 2013 'Khaled Bin Walid' fighting season on 28 April to coincide with Mujahideen Victory Day. Reminiscent of previous years, there was a general increase in attacks across Afghanistan to mark the start of their new fighting season but these were largely ineffective. Nevertheless, as the poppy harvest is completed, insurgent attacks are likely to increase nationwide with high profile targets (for example ISAF bases or Kabul) particularly attractive for the Taleban.

Whilst overall numbers of ISAF and UK casualties are lower this year compared to the same period last year (reflecting security transition and drawdown), the tragic incident on 30 April demonstrates insurgent intent to attack ISAF forces as transition and drawdown continues. We cannot become complacent about the immense dangers that still remain in many parts of Afghanistan; nor can we forget the sacrifices that continue to be made by coalition and Afghan forces as they seek to secure a viable Afghan state.

ANSF

The ANSF now delivers over 90% of its own training and is leading in excess of 80% of all operations. There is also growing evidence of greater co-ordination between elements of the Army and Police. Although isolated to some extent and largely personality based (the result of strong individual leadership rather than institutional), there are daily examples of effective combined planning and operational activity.

Despite these positive developments, a number of key risks remain. As it is the first fighting season during which the ANSF will lead the overall military response, the consequences of a dependency on certain ISAF enablers alongside high casualty rates and corruption may be compounded. High attrition rates also appear to pose a significant risk to ANSF resilience and confidence, although the degree to which this is the case is difficult to determine. We should gain a better understanding of how significant these risks are as the fighting season unfolds. ANSF performance, morale and confidence will need to be carefully monitored throughout, in advance of the most critical period for security – the Presidential elections in 2014.

HCDC Report

The House of Commons Defence Select Committee published their report 'Securing the Future of Afghanistan' on 10 April. The Report focused largely on ANSF capabilities, UK redeployment plans and the significant political, economic and security challenges that lie ahead post-2014. In total, the Committee made 38 Recommendations. The Government is due to issue a formal response by the 10 June.

German Post-2014 Presence

On 18 April, Germany announced its intent to support a possible post-2014 NATO train, advise and assist mission. Their contribution - of between 600 to 800 personnel from 2015 to 2016 in Northern Afghanistan, reducing to around 200 to 300 in Kabul – is dependent on an invitation from the Government of Afghanistan, a UN Security Council Resolution, a State Of Forces Agreement and an approved NATO plan, as well as support from other allies and the subsequent German Government which will be elected later this year.

Redeployment

As at 30 April, we have redeployed 348 vehicles, 220 items of major equipment and 949 twenty foot equivalent units of materiel as we continue the process of drawdown and transition.

The Pakistan Ground Line of Communication continues to operate successfully with some minor interruptions and delays. The three Uzbek transit treaties (rail, armoured vehicles, and air) completed the UK Parliamentary ratification process on 22 April. They will enter into force when the UK formally notifies the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs that our internal legal procedures are complete. The Air Bi-lateral Transit Agreement with Kazakhstan has passed the first ratification hurdle in its Parliament's Lower House. The agreement will now go to the Kazakh Senate for ratification and then to the President. Presidential sign-off may take place before the end of May 2013.

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 April 2013

	Target Strength (April 2013)	Actual Strength (April 2013)	April Target Met
ANA:	187,000	182,838	NO
AAF:	5,800	6,653	YES
ANP:	157,000	151,227	NO

Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	March Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	2.2%	NO
AAF:	1.4%	1.4%	YES

ANP:	1.4%	1.0%	YES
Uniformed Police	1.4%	0.9%	YES
Border Police	1.4%	1.7%	NO
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	1.9%	NO

Table Three: International Contributions to ISAF

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	68,000	68.3%
UK	9,000	9.0%
Germany	4,400	4.4%
Italy	3,049	3.0%
Poland	1,744	1.8%
Georgia	1,561	1.6%
Romania	1,536	1.5%
Spain	1,249	1.3%
Turkey	1,097	1.1%
Australia	1,084	1.1%
Others (40 nations)	6,870	6.9%
Current Total: 99,590		
<i>The above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 22 Apr 2013, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF</i>		

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
May 2013**