

Afghanistan Monthly Progress Report for February 2013

Written Ministerial Statement

25 March 2013

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): I wish to inform the House that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, together with the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development, is today publishing the twenty fifth progress report on developments in Afghanistan since November 2010.

On 3-4 February my Right Honourable fellow the Prime Minister hosted a summit at Chequers, attended by the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan. They were joined by Foreign Ministers, Chiefs of Defence Staff, Chiefs of Intelligence, the Afghan National Security Adviser and the Chair of the Afghan High Peace Council. Key achievements included agreement on co-operation between Afghan and Pakistan military and security services, strengthened coordination of Taliban prisoner releases from Pakistani detention and a public statement in support of the opening of a Taliban political office in Doha.

My Right Honourable fellow the Home Secretary made her first visit to Afghanistan 24-27 February. The visit focused on British-Afghan co-operation in areas including police training, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism and migration. The Afghanistan Minister of Defence, Bismillah Mohammadi, visited the UK 24-26 February. He held discussions on the development of the Afghan National Security Forces, Institutional Development, countering the insider threat, and progress of the UK-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral with the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Minister for the Armed Forces and the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan reported that civilian casualties in 2012 decreased by 12% compared with 2011. Civilian deaths caused by ISAF and Afghan Forces fell from 14% of the total to 8%, while deaths caused by the insurgency rose by 9% to 81%.

In February, my Right Honourable fellow the International Development Secretary approved £12 million from existing DfID funds to help deliver emergency food support to over 900,000 people in Afghanistan. This assistance will support activity over a five month period up June 2013 and target food insecure regions of Afghanistan to help reduce malnutrition-related rates of mortality and morbidity.

In his State of The Union Address on 14 February President Obama confirmed that the US military presence will be approximately halved over the next year, reducing to 34,000 US

troops in Afghanistan to the end of 2014. The reduction in international forces is made possible by the increasing capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces.

I am placing the report in the Library of the House. It will also be published on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website (www.fco.gov.uk).