

**AFGHANISTAN**  
**MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT**  
**January 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 fourth report covers progress in January 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**

In January, President Karzai and President Obama issued a joint statement, which included an announcement that they would support an office in Doha for the purpose of negotiations between the High Peace Council and the authorised representatives of the Taliban. HMG supports the opening of a Taliban office as an important step forward in the Afghan peace and reconciliation effort.

In January UNAMA released their 2012 report on the Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghan Custody. Their report contained findings that are of significant concern. HMG has already recognised the risk of torture or serious mistreatment at Afghan facilities. This was why we suspended transfers of UK captured detainees to the NDS in April 2012. This moratorium was reaffirmed by the Defence Secretary in November 2012.

The UK's support for Phase One of the Bost Agricultural Business Park in Helmand has delivered real benefits, including regular commercial flights connecting Helmand to the rest of the country. However, the UK has decided not to fund Phase Two, because it did not represent value for money. The money released will be used to support infrastructure projects with higher returns.

January saw some high profile attacks in Kabul that were dealt with by the ANSF, without a call for ISAF assistance. The first, on 16 January, attempted to enter the National Directorate of Security. The second, on 20 January, saw another IED attack outside the Kabul City Traffic Police Headquarters. While these attacks demonstrate the insurgency's intent to carry out a continued campaign of violence in Afghanistan, the response from the ANSF to both

incidents was prompt and professional. With the exception of ISAF advisors within Afghan elements, there was no request for, or involvement of, ISAF forces.

## **Strengthening the Afghan State**

### **Political**

The National Assembly began its winter recess amid a series of controversies. In the weeks leading up to the recess, MPs attempted to call roughly one third of the Afghan Cabinet for impeachment on the grounds that they failed to spend at least 50% of their annual development budget during the last financial year. MPs had first voted to call the Ministers for impeachment in early December, but the Speaker of the *Wolesi Jirga* (Lower House) led a faction opposed to the impeachment proceedings on technical grounds. After a series of heated debates on the subject, the confidence votes did not take place.

Whilst on 20 January the National Assembly successfully passed the Budget for the coming year, the important electoral reforms necessary before the elections scheduled for 2014 made little progress. Discussions on the drafts will resume after the Parliament returns on 5 March, leaving a small margin of error for the passage of the laws before the deadline of 5 April.

The second phase of the United Nations Needs Assessment Mission on preparations for the elections in 2014 was completed on 28 January. A report, including a series of recommendations, is expected in the coming weeks.

### **Reconciliation and Reintegration**

On 9-11 January President Karzai travelled to Washington to meet President Obama. In a joint statement, the two Presidents announced that they would support an office in Doha for the purpose of negotiations between the High Peace Council and the authorised representatives of the Taliban. They called on the armed opposition to join a political process, including by taking those steps necessary to open a Taliban office. On 16 January, the Qatari Government said that such an office would help security and peace efforts. The UK Government supports the opening of a Taliban office as an important step forward in the Afghan peace and reconciliation effort.

### **UNAMA Report**

On 21 January UNAMA released their 2012 report on the Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghan Custody. The report was highly critical of the standard of human rights compliance in Afghan detention facilities, finding no significant improvement in the treatment of detainees since its last report released in October 2011. The 2012 report found sufficiently credible and reliable evidence that more than half of the 635 detainees interviewed experienced torture or ill-treatment at numerous Afghan facilities. 105 child detainees were interviewed, 80 of whom had experienced torture or ill treatment. UNAMA also found reports of alleged ‘disappearances’ by Afghan National Police (ANP) and of alternative or unofficial sites where detainees were interrogated and tortured or mistreated prior to their detention in the National Directorate of Security (NDS) or ANP headquarters.

### **Governance**

The Strengthening Provincial Administration and Delivery (SPAD) programme is now operating in three provinces – Helmand, Bamyán and Uruzgan. The programme helps the Afghan Government plan and deliver basic services according to priorities set by local communities, thus promoting better links between Kabul and Provincial Government. Since September another 14 development projects have been completed in Helmand, bringing the total number of projects completed to 34 of the 40 approved for this year. Projects included the construction of ten small bridges. These have improved communities' access to markets and other local services, including health and education.

With support from the SPAD programme, 26 local government Ministry offices were given a supplement to their budgets to continue this work in the year ahead. These budgets included spending for education and public health, as well as pilot gender initiatives sponsored by the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

The UK continued to help Afghan institutions prepare for the important Presidential elections in 2014 and Parliamentary elections in 2015. UK support to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) through the UNDP-managed ELECT II programme has supported a number of initiatives including: the development of a revised voter registration plan to register voters from April 2013; leadership training of the IEC's senior team to drive the elections planning process; provincial training of 535 staff (including 74 women) in elections management; and increasing voter outreach (especially to women) through the enhanced capacity of the IEC's Gender and Public Relations Units.

### **Counter Narcotics (CN)**

The Afghan Minister for the Interior, Ghulam Mujtaba Patang visited the UK from 19 to 23 January. Minister Patang met the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for the Home Office, the Senior Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Minister of State for International Development and the Directors of British security and rule of law institutions. The successful visit continued to build on good relations between the UK and Afghanistan on rule of law and policing issues at a Ministerial and working level and strengthened key relationships with an important Afghan interlocutor.

The Head of Mission at the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) moderated a senior leaders' CN discussion in Copenhagen. Participants agreed that CN strategies needed to be reviewed against experience and aligned to the changing operational context.

The next season of Governor-led eradication is due to begin in the south of Afghanistan. The UK's PRT is supporting Governor Naeem's eradication plans by funding the maintenance of the tractor fleet and the tracking system used during the campaign. Eradication is likely to start towards the end of February, subject to weather and plant growth.

### **Economic and Social Development**

The Afghan Government's budget for year 1392 (2013) was approved by the Afghan Parliament on 20 January. Supported by DFID's Strengthening National Budget programme, the Ministry of Finance has significantly improved its management and oversight of public finances by taking forward essential reforms within key Afghan Government Ministries. This has helped to coordinate foreign aid through the National Budget to ensure funds reach the provinces. The International Budget Partnership's (IBP's) Open Budget Index compares the

budget transparency, participation and oversight of public finances of around 100 countries. Afghanistan's IBP rating rose 38 points from 21 in 2010 to 59 in 2012. The rise in score means that the IBP rates Afghanistan as more transparent in its budgeting than most middle income countries. Its IBP score of 59 places it as high as Poland and just below Italy (60).

On 16 January, the Deputy Ambassador attended a ceremony officially to hand over three districts in Herat designated free from the impact of mines and the explosive remnants of war. These districts - Obe, Chiste Sharif and Karukh – were surveyed and confirmed as impact-free by DFID funded teams from the HALO Trust. DFID's support to the HALO Trust is clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance across Herat province and saving lives. The project also aims to return more than 16,000 hectares of high priority land to productive use, improving livelihoods opportunities for local communities. So far more than 2,000 hectares of minefield have been cleared and more than 3,300 hectares of battlefield have been cleared, benefiting more than 211,000 local people.

The UK ceased further support to the Bost Agricultural Business Park in Helmand, following completion of phase one of the project. This has delivered real benefits, including regular commercial flights connecting Helmand to the rest of the country. Phase Two did not represent value for money, when compared with alternative opportunities for UK funding. The money released will be used to support infrastructure projects with higher returns.

With UK support, the Mid Helmand Sub Basin Agency (MHSBA) has taken the lead in the design and oversight of 18 canal maintenance projects. This was an important milestone that showed it was increasingly able to maintain and repair the Helmand irrigation system, which supports the livelihoods of thousands of farmers. Competition for water resources is a cause of local conflict in Helmand and improvements in water management help to prevent disputes.

## **Security**

As transition continues, we expect the insurgency will seek to maintain operational pressure on ISAF, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the Afghan Government. Throughout 2013 they are likely to seek to retain their relevance and exploit their narrative claiming that they have '*forced the ISAF drawdown*', while attempting to position themselves for the post-2014 environment.

This year, however, transition presents a different dynamic. The ANSF are increasingly leading security operations. It is possible the insurgency will likely seek to target any vulnerabilities identified, including continued attempts to carry out high profile assassinations of Afghan officials and senior members of the ANSF. Two recent attacks against headquarters in Kabul are reported below.

### **Kabul Attacks**

On 16 January a vehicle borne IED attempted to enter the National Directorate of Security compound in Kabul district. The vehicle was stopped at the entry control point and there was an explosion. There was a follow on attack by a second vehicle. The Afghans have reported that at least two guards were killed in the blast, which also wounded 30 people. The ANSF responded to the incident and all six insurgents were killed. As a result of their response the insurgents were unable to enter the compound.

On 20 January a vehicle borne IED detonated at Deh Maxanq Circle in Western Kabul City. This was closely followed by another suicide IED detonated outside the Kabul City Traffic Police Headquarters. Following the blasts, insurgents attacked the Traffic Police Headquarters building. Kabul City Police however soon cordoned the building, followed by an Afghan Crisis Response Unit which cleared and secured the area. The Afghan Ministry of the Interior reported that five attackers and three traffic officers were killed in the incident. With the exception of ISAF advisors within Afghan elements, there was no request for, or involvement of, ISAF forces.

While these attacks demonstrate the insurgency’s intent to carry out a continued campaign of violence in Afghanistan, the response from the ANSF to both incidents was prompt and professional.

### ANSF Casualties

While the rate of ISAF casualties has been decreasing, the Kabul attacks have contributed to an overall trend of increasing ANSF casualties. At the end of 2012 an Afghan spokesman said that nearly 463 Afghan National Army (ANA) officials were killed over the past six months, with eighty percent of those caused by IEDs. As the ANSF have grown considerably in size as they increasingly take the security lead (they now lead over 80% of conventional operations), more enemy initiated attacks are directed at the ANSF rather than on ISAF forces. As part of transition ISAF is increasingly working in a train, advise and assist role to help the Afghan National Security Forces improve their capability and in turn to help reduce the casualty rate for each engagement.

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

	Target Strength (January 2013)	Actual Strength (January 2013)	January Target Met
ANA:	187,000	177,579	NO
AAF:	5,800	6,014	YES
ANP:	157,000	149,775	NO*

\*ANP are not due at full strength until February 2013.

**Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates**

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	January Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	4.1%**	NO
AAF:	1.4%	1.8%	NO
ANP:	1.4%	1.4%	YES
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.1%	YES
Border Police	1.4%	2.3%	NO
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	2.5%	NO

## \*\*ANA Attrition

January's attrition rate for the ANA is higher than expected. A significant element of the 4.1% figure shown is artificially high as the result of the aggregation of several months of 'dropped from role'<sup>1</sup> data. Notwithstanding, high attrition rates within the ANA continue to represent a risk to the sustainability of the future force.

Attrition rates include those that have dropped from roll (the largest contributor), killed in action (or die of other causes), exempted<sup>2</sup>, captured, separated<sup>3</sup> or retired. There are a number of reasons that can affect attrition rates throughout all branches of the ANSF, including attributing it to factors ranging from the time of the harvest, and individual factors such as pay, leave and food allowances as well as poor leadership. Developments such as the National Military Academy of Afghanistan and the Afghan National Army Officer Academy are positive steps, but their effects are likely to take time to become fully visible.

More immediate initiatives are underway, including ensuring ANA soldiers return home during leave periods and improving clothing allocation, food standards and overall living conditions. At the national level, the Afghan chaired Joint Attrition Working Group (JAWG) meets weekly, and reports to a steering committee on a bi-monthly basis. Although high levels of recruitment mean that this is not enough to endanger overall growth targets, it does cause a drain on skills. ISAF, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and the Afghan MoD recognise this and are working hard to address it.

## Violence Levels

**Table Three: Security Incidents**

Type of incident	Definition	Change from December 2012	Comparison with January 2012
Security incidents	Enemy action and explosive hazards, both executed attacks and 'potential' attacks (e.g. an IED found and cleared)	↔ No significant change	↔ No significant change
Enemy initiated attacks	Attacks executed by insurgents (This does not include 'potential' attacks)	↔ No significant change	↔ No significant change
Complex and Coordinated attacks	Attacks that exhibit deliberate planning conducted by multiple hostile elements, against one or more targets and involving at least two distinct classes of weapons system.	↑ Rise in attacks	↑ Rise in attacks

**Table Four: International Contributions to ISAF**

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	68,000	66.7%

<sup>1</sup> Which includes those dismissed for being Absent Without Leave (AWOL)

<sup>2</sup> Meaning their contract is terminated by the Afghan authorities (such as through medical release).

<sup>3</sup> Separation after completion of mandatory 3-year contract.

UK	9,500*	9.3%
Germany	4,318	4.2%
Italy	4,000	3.9%
Poland	1,770	1.8%
Spain	1,606	1.6%
Georgia	1,561	1.5%
Romania	1,549	1.5%
Australia	1,094	1.0%
Turkey	998	1.0%
Others (40 nations)	7,615	7.5%
Current Total: 102,011		
<i>The above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 3 Dec 2012, actual numbers fluctuate daily.</i>		
<i>Source: ISAF</i>		

\*The most recent ISAF place mat is dated 3 December 2012. It does not reflect the drawdown of 500 UK forces personnel. At 31 Dec 2012 the UK's enduring force level in Afghanistan was 9,000 Service personnel.

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
February 2012**