



Department for
International
Development



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

AFGHANISTAN

MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

May 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 eighth report covers progress in May 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

Voter registration ahead of the 2014 Presidential and Provincial elections was begun in all 34 provinces on 26 May. Women make up 50 per cent of the voter registration teams. Limited progress was made on the passage of two important pieces of legislation which will form the structural basis of the electoral system used for the 2014 and 2015 electoral cycle.

The UK has agreed to support a post-2014 EU policing presence in Afghanistan. The debate on the post-2014 mission (EUPOL) will begin in the coming months.

As the fighting season intensifies, we have seen an increase in enemy initiated and spectacular attacks, particularly in the east, west and north of the country. Nevertheless, violence levels within Central Helmand appear lower than at the same point in the fighting season last year and the ANSF are holding firm. The ANSF responded well to attacks on the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Kabul and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Jalalabad.

On 8 May, the Prime Minister confirmed in Parliament that UK force levels will be reduced to around 7,900 by the end of May, and to around 5,200 by the end of 2013, in line with security transition and progress on the ground.

On 15 May the NATO Military Chiefs of Defence met and endorsed the Concept of Operations for the post 2014 NATO train, advise and assist mission in Afghanistan. Their

advice to NATO Defence Ministers recognises the initial requirement for a regional approach to security.

On 14 May the Defence Secretary announced that some UK forces deploying to Afghanistan this October on Herrick 19 will serve up to eight months, rather than the usual six month tours. In addition some personnel deploying on Herrick 20 in June 2014 may be required to serve up to nine months, to complete redeployment activity in Afghanistan should it continue into 2015. This will help to align our presence with key milestones between now and the end of 2014, such as the Presidential Elections and help to maintain operational continuity. Those personnel affected by the extended tours will be compensated from the 7.5 month point through the new Herrick Drawdown Allowance of £50 per day before tax. This will be paid on top of the standard operational allowance package (except for those in receipt of Campaign Continuity Allowance).

Strengthening the Afghan State

Political

Limited progress was made on the passage of two important pieces of legislation which will form the structural basis of the electoral system used for the 2014 and 2015 electoral cycle. The Independent Election Commission Structure and Duties Law remained in the Wolesi Jirga (the Lower House of Parliament) where further discussions were needed following the President's decision to return the draft law to Parliament. The wider Electoral Law was passed by the Wolesi Jirga on 22 May by 99 votes to 36. The Meshrano Jirga (the Upper House) has 15 days to consider the draft and make any amendments. It remains uncertain whether both laws will be passed by Parliament before the summer recess begins.

Voter registration began as expected on 26 May, with phase one focused on 41 registration centres across all 34 provinces. Women make up 50 per cent of the voter registration teams. On the first day of registration, 1,285 voters were registered (203 of them women). Phase two will begin on 25 July and will be based in district-level centres. Registration will continue until two weeks ahead of the elections, which are due to take place on 5 April 2014.

The UK is supporting the 2014 Presidential and Parliamentary elections through a multi-donor programme called the Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT II) programme. The programme is helping to strengthen the Independent Election Commission's ability to deliver credible and inclusive elections in Afghanistan. The UK is the largest donor to this programme, contributing £12 million.

On 18 May, Fawzi Koofi MP (and 2014 Presidential Candidate) attempted to introduce to the Afghan Parliament revisions to the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law, passed by Presidential Decree in 2009. This would have significantly strengthened the current EVAW law and ensured it was more sustainable due to parliamentary approval. Some MPs strongly objected on the grounds that certain clauses contravened the tenets and provisions of Islam, and the Speaker of the House closed the session without a vote. The law has been referred back to the Joint Commission of the Parliament, which is responsible for preparing draft laws, for further consideration. We do not expect it to be reintroduced to

Parliament in the foreseeable future. Although disappointing, the existing EVAW law continues to apply and we will continue to push for its full implementation.

Afghan Minister of Finance Omar Zakhilwal comfortably survived a confidence vote in the Wolesi Jirga, where he had been accused of corruption. In a speech refuting the charges, the Minister accused a number of Parliamentarians of being corrupt, beginning a public debate on the role of corruption in the Afghan political system.

Governance

The UK continues to help the Afghan Government deliver public services and respond to the needs of local people through the Strengthening Provincial Administration and Delivery (SPAD) Programme. The programme began in Helmand but has now been expanded to include Uruzgan and Bamyan provinces. In May, local government departments worked with local communities to finalise plans for how funds should be spent, with support from SPAD. During this financial year these two provinces plan to spend £1.8 million of UK and Danish international development investment to deliver essential public services, to improve rural development, energy and water supplies. Results will include refurbished schools, reconstruction of irrigation canals, water wells for schools and repaired roads. In Uruzgan, allowances will be paid to 600 school staff, including teachers, to allow them to operate in remote and insecure areas.

A public information shura was held in Nad Ali district in Helmand. It provided information about the upcoming District Council election and kick-started voter registration. By 23 May just under 7000 people from all over Nad Ali had registered to vote. This is a major step forward from the election three years ago, when some areas of the district sent no one to register at all.

Rule of Law and Counter Narcotics

We were concerned that on 20 May, following President Karzai's approval, two individuals convicted of the kidnapping and murder of a young child were executed. We have made clear to the Afghan government the UK's opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances.

The UK has agreed to support a post-2014 EU policing presence in Afghanistan. The debate on the post-2014 mission (EUPOL) will begin in the coming months.

Economic development

With UK support 30 representatives of farmers and traders from Helmand attended a two-day event connecting them to wholesale traders from Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. The event was supported by the UK and Denmark through the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility (CARD-F). It led to commitment to five contract arrangements for the provision of off-season fruits and vegetables. This support will continue to be provided by CARD-F's new office in Helmand province.

A new UK-funded vocational training centre opened in Musa Qala district in Helmand province, bringing the total number of training centres to 14 across eight districts in Helmand. Training at the new centre will cover computer skills and English language learning. The total number of students that have now graduated from these training centres is more than 15,800.

Security

As the fighting season intensifies, we have seen an increase in enemy initiated and spectacular attacks, particularly in the east, west and north of the country. This is reflected in a number of high profile attacks outside of traditional insurgent strongholds. There are also signs that the insurgency enjoys greater freedom to operate this year, particularly in the more sparsely populated areas of Afghanistan. Indirect Fire attacks on Camp Bastion and instances of larger IED strikes against ISAF in the south are indicative of this greater freedom. This is unsurprising given that ISAF's presence is reducing and the ANSF is concentrating its efforts on the more populous and economically important areas of Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, violence levels within Central Helmand appear lower than at the same point in the fighting season last year. With the ANSF holding an advantage in conventional fighting force, with superior numbers and military capability, the insurgency commonly resort to a mix of IED strikes, intimidation, coercion and complex and coordinated attacks in order to achieve their dual objective of undermining ANSF confidence and reiterating the Taliban's narrative that they have forced ISAF to withdraw.

During May there was a concerted insurgent offensive in Sangin to the north of Helmand, and two significant attacks against Georgian forces in Musa Qaleh and Now Zad resulted in nine Georgian fatalities and more than 70 injured.

ANSF

Determined insurgent attacks (particularly against the Afghan Local Police) have seen the ANSF temporarily cede ground but, when reinforcements are made available, this is often followed by deliberate operations to successfully retake that ground. For example, on 20 May the Taliban attacked up to 22 ANSF Check Points in Sangin District. Attacks continued on 21 and 22 May resulting in the abandonment of eight predominantly Afghan Local Police Check Points north of Sangin District Centre. On 23 May the ANSF launched a deliberate operation to retake the lost ground and re-open the main road north to Kajaki. As of 30 May, seven of these Check Points had been reoccupied and Route 611 reopened.

On 24 May, insurgents detonated a suicide vehicle IED near a UN IOM building in Kabul. Several insurgents followed up the detonation using Rocket Propelled Grenades and assault rifles. The ANSF responded to the attack without ISAF assistance by cordoning off the area, clearing the surrounding buildings and killing the remaining insurgents. In total there were four non-insurgent fatalities, but this number could have been far greater had the ANSF not responded as quickly and effectively as they did. Similarly in an attack on the ICRC building in Jalalabad on 29 May, the ANSF led all seven international staff to safety and dealt with insurgents, although sadly for the loss of one security officer.

In addition to such tactical successes, there are signs of a developing ANSF Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability. On 30 April the Afghan Air Force (AAF) flew a surveillance mission on behalf of the Afghan National Army. The mission covered several areas of interest and the AAF ISR team processed the collected data within 72 hours, providing the ANA with bespoke aerial imagery and a suitable intelligence capability.

It is still too early to assess the ANSF's overall success in dealing with the insurgency during this fighting season, and we will not be able to gain a complete picture of their confidence and resilience levels until after 2014 - when ISAF ends its combat mission in Afghanistan. There are encouraging signs however. The ANSF has now reached 98 per cent of its surge force target of 352,000 (agreed at the Chicago Conference in 2010). This indicates that despite ongoing problems with higher than planned attrition, particularly in the Army, the ANSF is still able to recruit sufficient volunteers to maintain its critical fighting strength whilst also professionalising the force. That said, there is more to be done to ensure that the ANSF possess adequate indigenous capabilities in certain key capability areas such as the Air Force and emergency medical cover.

As we enter the fiercest months of the fighting season, the ANSF will continue to face significant challenges. There will be successes and some failings. How they fare this summer will be a key indicator of their ability to secure Afghanistan independently in the longer term.

Post 2014 - NATO Concept of Operations

On 15 May the NATO Military Chiefs of Defence met and endorsed the Concept of Operations for the post 2014 NATO train, advise and assist mission in Afghanistan. Their advice to NATO Defence Ministers recognises the initial requirement for a regional approach to security. No recommendations on the size of the force were made.

Herrick Tours

On 14 May the Defence Secretary announced that some UK forces deploying to Afghanistan this October on Herrick 19 will serve up to eight month tours, rather than the usual six. Some personnel deploying on Herrick 20 in June 2014 may be required to serve up to nine months, to complete redeployment activity in Afghanistan should it continue into 2015. These changes will better align the final UK deployments with key milestones, including the Afghan Presidential Elections in spring 2014. It will also help maintain continuity in posts where we work closely with our Afghan partners at a time when retaining and bolstering Afghan confidence is critical, both for mission success and to ensure our own force protection. Finally, it removes the need to train and deploy another Brigade. It will therefore minimise the total number of Service personnel who deploy to Afghanistan over the next 18 months.

Those personnel affected by the extended tours will be compensated from the 7.5 month point through the new Herrick Drawdown Allowance of £50 per day before tax. This will be paid on top of the standard operational allowance package (except for those in receipt of

Campaign Continuity Allowance) and is intended to compensate for the combination of the longer period of duty, the uncertainty surrounding the length of their tour, and the relative austerity that may characterise the final stages of the Herrick campaign.

The Task Force Helmand relief in place has now completed and deployed 100 per cent of the Herrick 18 force, and recovered 100 per cent of the Herrick 17 force.

Redeployment

On 8 May, the Prime Minister confirmed in Parliament that UK force levels will be reduced to around 7,900 by the end of May, and will reduce further to around 5,200 by the end of 2013. This is the result of progress on the ground, increased ANSF capability and the rate of security transition.

As of 31 May, we have redeployed 625 vehicles and major equipments (VAME) and 1,080 twenty foot equivalent units (TEUs) of materiel from Afghanistan. This represents an estimated forecast of 18.7 per cent of the total number of VAME, and 19.7 per cent of TEUs, which are due to be redeployed between now and the end of 2014.

On 31 May the remaining Merlin helicopters currently in Theatre ceased tasking. They are due to be redeployed over the coming months. Merlin provided troop and freight transport for Operation Herrick. Due to the UK drawdown of bases and force levels, the additional capacity provided by Merlin aircraft is no longer required in theatre. There will be no capability gap, or risk to personnel and operations, as troop and freight transport will continue to be undertaken by other available aircraft that remain in Theatre.

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 21 May 2013

	Target Strength (May 2013)	Actual Strength (May 2013)	May Target Met
ANA:	187,000	186,399	NO
AAF:	5,800	6,694	YES
ANP:	157,000	151,824	NO

Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	May Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	2.5%	NO

AAF:	1.4%	0.9%	YES
ANP:	1.4%	1.5%	NO
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.6%	NO
Border Police	1.4%	1.8%	NO
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	1.5%	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>		