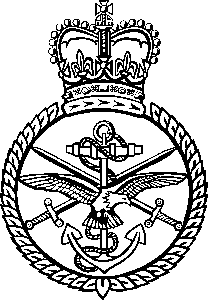
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**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**



**AFGHANISTAN**

**MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT**

**October 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 report covers progress in October 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 Prime Minister hosted a trilateral meeting in Downing Street on 29th October with President Karzai of Afghanistan and Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan. The three leaders discussed Afghanistan-Pakistan economic cooperation and the Afghan-led peace process, to which they reaffirmed their continuing commitment. This was the fourth in a series of leader-level trilateral meetings, and the first under the new Pakistani Government.

During October a number of figures from across the Afghan Government and wider authorities resigned their positions in order to run in the elections. These included the Minister for Foreign Affairs Zalmai Rassoul, the Minister for Mines Wahidullah Shahrani, the Minister for Commerce Anwaral-Haq Ahadi, and Minister for Energy and Water Ismail Khan.

The UK-supported the Helmand National Investors Association (HNIA) capacity-building project which was completed in October. HNIA will help improve the local business environment and increase the ability of firms to provide employment in the region. By supporting Afghan organisations like the HNIA the UK has helped to ensure the conditions for private sector development continue in Helmand after transition.

The UK has committed to making Herat province free of mines and unexploded ordnance by 2018. Latest reporting published in October shows that over the last six months, UKAid has cleared more than 258 hectares of minefield and 322 hectares of battlefield in Herat province. More than 7,000 families have benefited from land returned to productive use this year.

On 10 October, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2120 on the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghanistan. The resolution extended the authorisation for ISAF under Chapter VII of the UN charter for a further 14.5 months, up to its departure on 31 December 2014.

On 20 October, the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) opened for the first intake of cadets to start their training. There are around 270 cadets undertaking training after 10,000 initially applied.

On 15 October, Lance Corporal James Brynin of 14 Signal Regiment was killed after coming under enemy fire during an operation to reduce the indirect fire threat in Nahri Sarraj. His death is a reminder of the continuing danger that our troops face as we draw down and focus our efforts on training and advising the Afghan security forces.

**Strengthening the Afghan State**

**Political**

The nomination window for candidates in the 5 April 2014 presidential and provincial council elections closed on 6 October. Most candidates in the presidential election opted to register at the last moment. 27 put themselves forward for the presidency, including one female candidate. Eight women were nominated as vice presidential candidates. 3056 people registered to contest 458 Provincial Council seats, including 323 women (96 seats are guaranteed for women under the quota system). One presidential hopeful was disqualified by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) for failing for collect the required 100,000 signatures. On 22 October, the IEC disqualified a further 16 candidates leaving a short list of 10 tickets and 2704 provincial council candidates, including 308 women.

A number of key figures from across the Afghan Government and wider authorities resigned their positions in order to run in the elections. These included the Minister for Foreign Affairs Zalmai Rassoul, the Minister for Mines Wahidullah Shahrani, the Minister for Commerce Anwaral-Haq Ahadi, Minister for Energy and Water Ismail Khan, the Senior Minister Hedayat Amin Arsala, the President’s Advisor on Defence Abul Rahim Wardak, Head of the High Office of Oversight Azizullah Ludin, the Governor of Bamiyan Province Habiba Sorabi and the Governor of Nangarhar Gul Agha Sherzai. President Karzai has announced replacements for some of these figures, but appointments have yet to be approved by Parliament.

Arsala Jamal, the Governor of Logar Province, was killed when a bomb was detonated in a mosque during celebrations for Eid al Adha in Pul-e Elam, the provincial capital, on 15 October.

The Prime Minister hosted a trilateral meeting in Downing Street on 29th October with President Karzai of Afghanistan and Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan. The three leaders discussed Afghanistan-Pakistan economic cooperation and the Afghan-led peace process, to which they reaffirmed their continuing commitment. This was the fourth in a series of leader-level trilateral meetings, and the first under the new Pakistani Government. During his visit, President Karzai had bilateral meetings with the Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary and the International Development Secretary, discussing a range of topics including elections, future Afghan security and Afghan development. He also enjoyed a meeting with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and an audience with Her Majesty The Queen.

**Rule of Law and Counter Narcotics**

The UK-funded Helmand Evidence and Intelligence Development Integration – Centre (HEIDI) finally opened this month and has been successfully handed over to the Afghan National Security Directorate (NDS). HEIDI will give the Afghans the capability to collect their own forensic evidence to support counter terrorism prosecutions.

Din Mohammad Mubariz Rashidi (former Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Information and Culture) has replaced Zarar Ahmad Moqbel Osmani as Minister for Counter Narcotics. Since his appointment, the new Minister has spoken of his commitment to tackling the drugs trade in Afghanistan, the importance of alternative livelihoods and the need for a coordinated effort across the Afghan ministries.

**Economic and Social Development**

Harakat, an Afghan led, Afghan run NGO supported by UKAid, has (in partnership with the Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry) launched the Harakat Integrity Initiative. The initiative will bring together Afghan businesspeople, religious leaders and civil society to take action to tackle corruption, which businesses and customers face in their day-to-day lives. Bribes are a significant cost to business. Through this Afghan led initiative, members will seek to bring change at a grass-roots level. This initiative was one of six new projects launched by Harakat, all designed to help improve the investment and business climate in Afghanistan.

The UK-supported Helmand National Investors Association (HNIA) capacity-building project has completed. The HNIA was formed in 2010 by a group of Helmandi business professionals. The HNIA has developed a new strategy and plans to become financially self-sustainable. The new strategy aims to improve the services provided to HNIA members, including a new business information centre, assistance with permits, and recruitment. In doing so, they will help improve the local business environment and increase the ability of firms to provide employment in the region. By supporting Afghan organisations like the HNIA the UK has helped to ensure the conditions for private sector development continue in Helmand after transition.

Over 170 (SME) competed to receive funding through the second applications round of DFID-funded Afghanistan Business Innovation Fund (ABIF) grants. ABIF provides grants to SMEs whose business models introduce market innovations that have pro-poor benefits. The benefits will include improving income opportunities and providing access for the poor to better, or previously unavailable, goods and services. The SMEs who receive grants are themselves required to make substantial new investments to stimulate additional private sector investment. Of 33 SMEs that were shortlisted, 14 have now been awarded grants. The total value of these investments comes to £8.6 million, of which DFID contributed £2.3 million in grants. The remaining £6.3 million was leveraged from the private sector. A grant-signing ceremony was held at the British Embassy on 7 October, attended by the Ambassador and the Head of DFID Afghanistan. The second round grantees include:

* A healthcare centre in Badakhshan Province set up by a female doctor that will provide a low-cost health insurance programme and a well-equipped health clinic for the poor.
* A cotton processing unit that will improve the availability of better, cheaper medical-grade cotton and provide a market for cotton farmers.
* A sapling nursery in Nangarhar Province that amongst other things will provide fruit growers with certified saplings, increasing the production of high-quality, Afghan fruit products.
* A furniture company that will establish a network of 200 small carpentry shops providing thousands of carpenters with access to machinery, raw materials and training.
* An ice cream company in Herat that will set up improved milk collection centres, improving access to markets for milk producers.

The UK has committed to making Herat province free of mines and unexploded ordnance by 2018. Latest reporting published in October shows that over the last six months, UKAid has cleared more than 258 hectares of minefield and 322 hectares of battlefield in Herat province. More than 7,000 families have benefited from land returned to productive use this year.

**Governance**

Through the multi-donor funded Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow Programme (ELECT II), UK Aid is helping the Afghan Independent Elections Commission prepare for the 2014 presidential and provincial elections. By the end of October more than 2.6 million people received new voter ID cards, of which 33 percent were women. Voter registration will remain open until 10 November. At the district level, 393 voter registration centres are open. The UK continues to monitor election preparations, including voter registration, closely.

Afghanistan has now joined the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), which was launched in 2008 with UK support. CoST will help Afghan citizens to access construction project information more easily, allowing communities to monitor construction projects and challenge corruption where they find it. Afghanistan’s decision to join CoST follows recommendations made by the DFID-funded Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) on the need for greater transparency in the Afghan construction sector.

**Security**

On 10 October, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2120 on the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghanistan. The resolution extended the authorisation for ISAF under Chapter VII of the UN charter for a further 14.5 months, up to its departure on 31 December 2014.  The resolution welcomed progress towards the completion of security transition to Afghan Forces, elections, and long-term partnerships being forged between Afghanistan and its partners. It also strengthened language on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), the role of Women in the Peace and Reconciliation process, and on Children in Armed Conflict.

On 15 October, Lance Corporal James Brynin of 14 Signal Regiment was killed after coming under enemy fire during an operation to reduce the indirect fire threat in Nahri Sarraj. His death is a reminder of the continuing danger that our troops face as we draw down and focus our efforts on training and advising the Afghan security forces.

**ANSF**

Despite some tactical successes and the insurgency continuing to inflict high numbers of casualties on the ANSF, strategically neither the ANSF nor the insurgency can be said to have delivered a decisive blow this fighting season. ANSF prioritisation of the major population centres has meant the insurgency has been unable to penetrate cities or district centres in numbers. However, the insurgency has used their greater freedom to operate in rural areas (as a consequence of ISAF drawdown) to maintain pressure on the ANSF and GIRoA targets.

The ANSF are continuing to lead major tactical operations in all regions of Afghanistan. During October, 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, and the ANSF increasingly use their own artillery for fire support rather than calling on ISAF assets.

The ANSF continue to have tactical advantage over the insurgency on the battlefield, providing effective security in the main population centres and enjoying growing support from the local population. However, the insurgents continue to conduct suicide attacks and use large improvised explosive devices to strike at the ANSF and ISAF.

**ANAOA**

On 20 October, the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) opened for the first intake of cadets to start their training. There are around 270 cadets undertaking training after 10,000 initially applied. On 23 October, the Academy held a media day, which generated widespread positive international coverage.

On the 26 October there was an insider attack near to an Afghan National Army barracks 1km away from the headquarters of the ANAOA, resulting in two minor ISAF injuries and the death of the ANA attacker. This caused minimal disruption to the Academy, which returned to normal operations following a thorough investigation of events and force protection measures.

**NATO Defence Ministers**

NATO Defence Ministers met on 22-23 October to discuss a coordinated approach to training and exercises, and to appraise the security situation in Afghanistan. In his opening remarks, Secretary General Rasmussen said that the ANSF had risen to the challenge of taking on the lead for security in Afghanistan with “great courage and growing professionalism”. He also stated that we can be confident in their ability to assume responsibility for securing their own country at the end of next year, enabling the planned transition of full security responsibility to the ANSF by the end of 2014.

**Locally Engaged Staff**

A Written Ministerial Statement on 4 June described the ex-gratia options of training, financial assistance and, in some cases, relocation for locally engaged staff following their departure from HMG employment. This scheme, involving former staff from MOD, FCO and DFID, commenced in Afghanistan on 25 October.

**Royal Marine Trial**

The court martial of three Royal Marines charged with murder of an unknown captured person in Afghanistan in 2011 started on 23 October, and is expected to last three weeks.

**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 Sep 2013**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Strength  (Sep 2013) | Actual Strength  (Sep 2013) | Sep Target Met |
| ANA: | 187,000 | 185,817 | NO |
| AAF: | 8,000 | 6,778 | NO |
| ANP: | 157,000 | 152,336 | NO |

**Table Two:  ANSF Attrition Rates**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Monthly Attrition | Actual Monthly Attrition | Sep Target Met |
| ANA: | 1.4% | 2.9% | NO |
| AAF: | 1.4% | 0.9% | YES |
| ANP: | 1.4% | 2.1% | NO |
| Uniformed Police | 1.4% | 2.5% | NO |
| Border Police | 1.4% | 1.7% | NO |
| National Civil  Order Police | 1.4% | 2.6% | NO |

**Table Three: International Contributions to ISAF**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Contribution | % of Total |
| US | 60,000 | 70.6% |
| UK | 6,000 | 7.1% |
| Germany | 4,400 | 5.2% |
| Italy | 2,826 | 3.3% |
| Georgia | 1,560 | 1.8% |
| Poland | 1,553 | 1.8% |
| Turkey | 1,041 | 1.2% |
| Australia | 1,029 | 1.2% |
| Romania | 1,022 | 1.2% |
| Canada | 950 | 1.1% |
| Others (39 nations) | 4,553 | 5.4% |
| Current Total: 84,934 | | |
| *The above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 1 Oct 2013, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF* | | |

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**October 2013**