

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
July – August 2011

The UK is engaged in Afghanistan as 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. Due to the summer recess, this ninth report covers progress in July and August. 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

This report covers the months of July and August, commonly associated with a seasonal escalation of violence, and the month of Ramadan, a period during which the Taliban leadership has called for increased activity. There have been a number of high-profile attacks, including the 19 August attack on the British Council, which seriously undermine perceptions of security although overall, there have been fewer enemy attacks across the country than last year. Progress has been made towards our security objectives but challenges remain, including civilian casualties as highlighted by the latest UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) report. General Allen took command of ISAF in July and is conducting a campaign review.

The first seven areas (including Lashkar Gah in Helmand) formally began the transition process in July. Transition does not mean an immediate withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops but will see the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) begin to take lead responsibility for security in the areas. ANSF numbers have now exceeded their October 2011 target of 305,600 and a new target of 352,000 has been set for the end of October 2012; this has been endorsed by the Security Standing Committee of the Joint (Afghan and NATO) Coordination and Monitoring Board. There was a welcome reduction in overall Afghan National Police (ANP) attrition which brings the rate back on target but Afghan National Army (ANA) attrition rates still need to be reduced.

We welcome President Karzai's Decree of 10 August which ruled that the final decisions of the parliamentary crisis should rest with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). On 21

August the IEC announced its findings and called for the replacement of nine sitting MPs. It will fall to the Secretariat of the Lower House of Parliament to implement the changes.

Political

Reconciliation and Reintegration

On 15 July the UN Security Council agreed to delist the first 14 individuals from the new UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1988 sanctions regime (that replaced the UNSCR 1267 regime). This included five individuals who are currently working with the High Peace Council to take forward the reconciliation process. It represented a clear signal of the international community's support for this Afghan-led process and for the participation in dialogue of all Afghans who are prepared to meet the Afghan Government's three conditions. This message was reinforced by the Prime Minister during his visit to Afghanistan on 4-5 July. The international community also demonstrated its enduring commitment to target entities or individuals who continue to commit acts of violence by listing the Pakistani group Tehrik-e Taliban (TTP) on the UNSCR 1989 (Al-Qaeda) sanctions regime.

Over 2,300 individuals have now enrolled in the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) nationwide. This includes the first formal enrolments in Helmand, when nineteen former fighters from Nad-e-Ali, Sangin and Marjeh completed the APRP's enrolment process in July. This was a strong and visible indication of progress, managed by the Afghans from district to provincial to national level. It also identified that further work is needed to improve the vetting, the capacity to collect biometric information and the disbursement of funds from the centre to the districts. We are working with the Afghans to take this forward.

Regional Developments

The Afghan, Pakistani and US Trilateral Core Group met for the fourth time on 2 August in Islamabad. The group focuses on co-operation between the three countries on the political process in Afghanistan and the most recent meeting discussed preparations for the Istanbul and Bonn Conferences later this year.

Parliament

On 10 August President Karzai issued a Decree ruling that the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) would be the final arbiter for all outstanding issues relating to the September 2010 parliamentary election results. This effectively ended the work of the Special Court that was established following the announcement of final results in December.

On 21 August the IEC announced its findings and called for the replacement of nine sitting MPs by candidates that had succeeded in their respective provinces but had subsequently been disqualified by the Electoral Complaints Commission (EEC).

It falls to the Secretariat of the Lower House of Parliament to implement the changes. The British Embassy in Kabul issued a statement welcoming President Karzai's Decree as a means of resolving the dispute and looking forward to MPs resuming their work.

Strengthening the Afghan State

Justice and Rule of Law

The UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) continued its work with the Afghan Government to increase the presence, capacity and capabilities of prosecutors and investigators in the provinces and districts. In accordance with the Helmand Plan, prosecutors are now working in Nahr-e-Saraj, Nad-e-Ali, Nawa, Garmsir, Marjeh and Musa Qala, and one week a month in Sangin. Training of prosecutors also continues by the British Embassy Kabul. To support access to justice for women, the PRT facilitated 20 women from Helmand, including representatives from the Department of Women's Affairs, Provincial Council, and the Independent Commission on Women and Children's Rights, to attend a three-week 'Train the Trainer' course in family law, women's rights, and providing counselling to women.

Helmand's previously run-down prison benefited from a programme of refurbishment in July, extending detention facilities for up to 850 prisoners. Work will start on a separate detention facility for juvenile prisoners during September, along with the first phase of a rehabilitation centre. A female facility is planned for 2012/13.

Currently there are a total of 512 trainees at the Regional Training Centre in Helmand, which trains police officers. August saw the first intake graduate under the new training regime, which consolidates literacy, basic firearms training and civilian policing skills. Through the UK's support to the Ministry of Interior, senior staff have recently received planning and management training. They are now better equipped to plan and ensure delivery of the Ministry's strategic objective of improved police services

Governance

A positive second visit by the international and Afghan Monitoring and Evaluation Committee was held in August. The MEC met with President Karzai, key ministers and media and civil society across the country. It is developing benchmarks and recommendations on anti-corruption action required. The next visit is planned for November.

UK support in July enabled an Afghan civil society organisation to open a new provincial office. The office will train local community volunteers to monitor reconstruction projects being implemented by the Government and set up forums where citizens can raise their concerns. This in turn will help the Government to become more accountable and responsive to the Afghan people.

All key central Helmand districts now have a functioning council. This includes six District Community Councils (DCC), an interim municipal council in Lashkar Gah and an interim district council in Sangin. We aim to work with the Afghan Government to establish two new Community Councils in Nowzad and Khan-e-Shin later in 2011/12. However, the challenges to governance in Helmand from murder and intimidation were made clear through the assassination of two DCC members (from Gereshk and Nawa) and a Prosecutor in Gereshk in the same week in August.

UK support to UN Habitat in Lashkar Gah resulted in the inauguration of the new Mayor's office in August. This will help municipal officials respond better to the needs of residents,

for example by providing a space for communities to meet and agree priorities for development projects.

There are now district governors installed in 12 of Helmand's 14 districts, with a mayor in place in Lashkar Gah. Twenty-six Afghan line ministries are now represented in Lashkar Gah. August saw the production of two new district development plans for Sangin and Musa Qala and plans for the next financial year in seven districts. This demonstrates how the Government is responding better to local needs.

The UK led PRT continues to move away from direct delivery in Helmand towards a model that further promotes Afghan leadership in governance and development and will continue to support the capacity-building of governance structures in Helmand through training district staff in development co-ordination and implementation.

Economic and Social Development

Revenue collection for the first quarter of the financial year (to 22 July 2011) reached Afghani (AFN) 32.1 bn, (£457m), an increase of 30% over the same period last year, exceeding the Government's target by nearly 3%. The UK is supporting tax administration reforms and helping to strengthen the performance of the Budget Department in the Ministry of Finance.

The UK's support is leading to improved transparency in Government budgeting and planning. For the first time the Ministry of Finance published Afghanistan's national budget on its website, and submitted it to Parliament for approval. A six-page Citizens' Budget was published, explaining the budget in non-technical terms. The Ministry of Finance also held an open meeting on the budget with 30 representatives from key civil society organisations. These actions have stimulated a new level of public debate and transparency about the country's budget.

In July 72 new Community Development Councils (CDCs) were elected under the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). Each CDC will now identify community investment priorities and create community development plans for funding, including primary healthcare centres, schools, water pumps and local roads. In August £3.385m was distributed to CDCs to implement approved projects. The NSP is now engaging with new communities in insecure or geographically isolated areas.

In central Helmand improvements to the road network are helping to increase citizens' access to local markets and basic services. Approximately 34 kilometres of asphalt road have now been completed from Nahr-e-Saraj to Nad-e-Ali. A further 14 kilometres are under construction, and 5 kilometres of asphalt road have been completed on the Lashkar Gah to Greshk Road.

Counter Narcotics

Progress continues in countering the drugs trade, including against its links with the insurgency. Over seven tonnes of opium, heroin and precursor chemicals have been seized in the last two months by the Afghan Special Narcotics Force. In these operations, significant

quantities of weapons, explosives and bomb-making materials were also seized, demonstrating once again the links between the drugs traffickers and the insurgents.

Headway is being made against the corruption associated with narcotics. In July, the appeal court of the Criminal Justice Task Force sentenced the Governor of Delaram district, Nimruz province, to up to 20 years imprisonment for trafficking drugs and providing facilities for drug traffickers using police vehicles.

On 3 August the United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime, along with the Ministry for Counter Narcotics published their report on poppy eradication for 2011. This detailed an increase in poppy eradication compared to last year, with 3,810 hectares eradicated, compared to 2,316 hectares in 2010. In Helmand, eradication increased to 1,940 hectares from 1,602 last year.

Education

In Helmand, a centralised teacher training scheme has begun: a train-the-trainer course for 50-60 students will be followed by the first tranche of 150 teachers from Nad-e-Ali and Nawa. A further 350 teachers will be trained before the new school year begins in September.

Security

Insurgent Threat

Type of incident	Definition	Change from June 2011	Comparison to July/Aug 2010
Security incidents	Enemy action and explosive hazards, both executed attacks and ‘potential’ attacks (e.g. an IED found and cleared)	↔ No significant change	↓ Fall in incidents
Enemy initiated attacks	Attacks executed by insurgents (This does not include ‘potential’ attacks)	↔ No significant change	↓ Fall in attacks
Complex attacks	Attacks conducted by multiple hostile elements employing at least two distinct classes of weapon	↔ No significant change	↓ Fall in attacks

These trends are encouraging, particularly as there has been no significant increase in incidents despite direction from Taliban senior leadership that activity should be increased around and during Ramadan. However, factors such as the timing of Ramadan and the higher number of ISAF and Afghan troops operating this summer can affect trends. It would be premature to draw definitive conclusions as the tempo of operations remains high and progress is not yet irreversible. We should expect challenges ahead, particularly for the ANSF as they take the lead on more operations.

In July and August there were a number of high-profile incidents. Most notable were the attack on the British Council compound in Kabul, the shooting down of a Chinook helicopter carrying US and Afghan forces and the murders of Ahmed Wali Karzai, the President’s brother, and Jan Mohammad Khan, senior aide to the President. Investigations are underway into all these incidents, but there is no reason to suggest that they constitute new insurgent

capabilities; indeed it is not proven that some of these attacks were carried out by the insurgency. Whilst attacks which capture media attention are not always successful on a tactical level, they damage perceptions of security and, in a campaign where perceptions are key, this can be very detrimental.

On 19 August Afghan insurgents launched an attack on the British Council compound in Kabul. One New Zealand Special Forces soldier and three local national G4S guards were killed, plus eight other Afghan police and civilians. The two British Council staff and their South African G4S Protection Officer, who were on the compound at the time, were able to take refuge in the safe room before being moved to the British Embassy unharmed but shaken. The ANSF, who manage Kabul’s security with only limited ISAF support, successfully cleared the compound. This attack will erode perceptions of security in Kabul but insurgents remain largely unable to affect the seat of Government or the lives of most Kabul citizens. Kabul is home to 20% of Afghanistan’s population yet sees less than 1% of attacks. We have condemned the attack and the deaths of a number of Afghan guards and bystanders in the strongest terms and praised the efforts of the security forces, including the ANSF, who responded quickly to the crisis. The international community sent messages of solidarity and offers of support and President Karzai publicly condemned this attack.

Civilian Casualties

On 14 July the UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) published its latest report into civilian casualties. Civilian deaths in the first six months of 2011 are reported to have increased by 15% over the same period in 2010 but the proportion caused by ISAF and Afghan forces has fallen from 18% to 14%. Protecting the population remains at the core of our strategy in Afghanistan and we will continue to take considerable steps to avoid civilian casualties.

Troop contributions

On 6 July the Prime Minister, following his visit to Afghanistan, announced that UK force levels would be reduced from 9,500 to 9,000 by the end of 2012. The decision was discussed by the National Security Council and takes into account military advice and progress made towards transition. We remain committed to the campaign in Afghanistan and, whilst we will not be there in a combat role by 2015, we will continue to support the Afghans. In Kabul, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would lead the new Afghan National Army (ANA) Officer Academy from 2013 and beyond 2015 as part of our long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

Table One: International Contributions to ISAF:

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	90,000	69.0%
UK	9,500	7.3%
Germany	5,000	3.8%
Italy	3,974	3.0%
France	3,939	3.0%
Poland	2,579	2.0%
Romania	1,949	1.5%
Turkey	1,840	1.4%

Australia	1,550	1.2%
Spain	1,523	1.2%
Others (37 nations)	8,843	6.8%
Current Total	130,697	100.00%
<i>Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 16 August 2011, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF</i>		

Progress towards Transition

The first group of three provinces and four urban districts, covering almost a quarter of the Afghan population, began the security transition process in July. Among them was Lashkar Gah, which held a ceremony to mark the formal start of the process on 20 July attended by several Afghan Ministers, Commander ISAF, General Allen and the NATO Senior Civilian Representative, Sir Simon Gass. The start of the transition process demonstrates the progress that the UK and our ISAF partners in Helmand have made in helping the Afghan National Security Forces develop the capability to take on increasing security responsibility. Policing in Lashkar Gah city has been conducted by the Afghan Uniformed Police for some time now: Task Force Helmand has only needed to respond to one security incident in Lashkar Gah city since August 2010.

The Insurgency continues to test the strength of ISAF and ANSF across Helmand. In Lashkar Gah there has been an increase in attacks over July and August, with several high profile incidents targeting ANSF members and infrastructure. However, overall levels of violence in Central Helmand are down on the same period last year.

The Afghan Government and ISAF are now conducting the preparatory work needed to begin the transition process for the next set of provinces and districts. It is anticipated that this work will be completed early in the autumn and that the second group will enter the transition process before the end of the year. The process remains on track for the Afghan National Security Forces to lead on security across the country by the end of 2014.

ANSF Growth and Capability

In July the Standing Security Committee of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), the formal decision-making body for Afghan and international coordination, endorsed increases in the growth targets of the ANA to 195,000 and the ANP to 157,000 by 31 October 2012. These increases will provide important headroom to allow police and soldiers to leave the front line on rotation for training and continued professionalisation. However, this uplift does underline the enduring need for the international community to work together to agree a sustainable financial support package for the ANSF beyond 2014. More than 120,000 ANSF have now completed some level of literacy training and 91,000 are taking formal literacy classes. There was a pleasing reduction in overall ANP attrition which brings rates back on target. ANA attrition rates were reduced but remain above the target rate.

Table Two: ANSF Growth to 30 July 2011

	Objective (31 October 2011)	Target Strength (30 July 2011)	Actual Strength (30 July 2011)	July Target Met
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ANA:	171,600	162,108	171,050	Yes
ANP:	134,000	129,321	135,029	Yes
ANA Officers:	26,400	25,501	22,239	No
ANA NCOs:	59,000	55,700	45,790	No

Table Three: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	July Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	2.2%	No
ANP:	1.4%	1.4%	Yes
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.1%	Yes
Border Police	1.4%	2.1%	No
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	3.1%	No

We plan the next report for the third week of October and this will include September and October ANSF figures. Subsequent monthly reports will have the latest ANSF figures.

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
August 2011**